A HISTORY OF THE SIKHS

Volume 2: 1839–2004

SECOND EDITION

Khushwant Singh

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A History of the Sikhs
Volume II: 1839–2004

First published in 1963, this remains the most comprehensive and authoritative book on the Sikhs. The new edition updated to the present recounts the return of the community to the mainstream of national life. Written in Khushwant Singh's trademark style to be accessible to a general, non-scholarly audience, the book is based on sound archival research.

Volume I covers the social, religious, and political background which led to the formation of the Sikh faith in the fifteenth century. Basing his account on original documents in Persian, Gurmukhi, and English, the author traces the growth of Sikhism and tells of the compilation of its sacred scriptures in the Granth Sahib. Volume II covers a range of issues related to the Sikh struggle for survival as a separate community—conflict with the English and the collapse of the Sikh kingdom; its consolidation as a part of Britain's Indian empire; religious and sociological movements born under the impact of new conditions; the growth of political parties—nationalist, Marxist, and communal; the fate of the Sikhs in the division of the Punjab and the great exodus from Pakistan; and resettlement of the Sikhs in independent India and the establishment of a Punjabi-speaking state within the Union.

Khushwant Singh a renowned journalist, is the author of several works of fiction, and an authority on Sikh history. A former editor of the *Illustrated Weekly of India* (1979–80), and the *Hindustan Times* (1980–3), he was Member of Parliament from 1980–6. He returned his Padma Bhushan, awarded in 1974, in protest against the Union Government's siege of the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

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Preface to the Second Edition

Since the last edition of *A History of the Sikhs* Volume II was published, many events concerning the Sikhs have taken place in the Punjab and abroad. These twenty years witnessed a steep rise in the incidence of terrorism which took a toll of thousands of lives, including that of the retired Chief of Army Staff, a serving Chief Minister of the State, a retired Finance Minister, police officers and civilians: it saw increase in the distance between Sikhs and Hindus and the migration of Hindus from Sikh-dominated villages to towns and cities. It also saw the gradual decline in terrorism, the virtual disappearance of the demand for a separate Sikh State and restoration of amicable relations between the two communities as well as the return of law and order and normalcy in the state. During these twenty years the state was put under President's Rule several times and since then has had Akali and Congress party governments. At the same time subtle changes were taking place in the economic life of the community. A large number of young Sikhs migrated to foreign countries to seek their fortunes: farm workers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh came to the Punjab to work as labourers of Sikh farmers and settled in the state, bringing about important demographic changes.

Writing the history of a community was not an easy task. Chronicling events of the recent past proved more daunting. I had to rely almost entirely on what appeared in the print media, mainly *India Today* and the *Tribune*. I also consulted reports

time chief justice of the Punjab High Court) for reading the manuscript; to Dr M. S. Randhawa for information on Sikh painting; to Mr J. H. McIlwaine and Mrs Rimington of the India Office Library for assistance in compiling the bibliography; and to Miss Yvonne Le Rougetel, who collaborated with me in the research and writing of both the volumes. I would also like to place on record my gratitude to the Rockefeller Foundation and to the Muslim University, Aligarh, for allowing me to continue and complete this work.

For the revised paperback edition I acknowledge assistance given by Satindra Singh of the *Economic Times* and Rajinder Singh Bhatia, Editor of *Qaumi Ekta.*

KHUSHWANT SINGH
Editor
Illustrated Weekly of India, Bombay

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I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to the Woodrow Wilson Center for a three-month grant which enabled me to devote my entire attention to examining the material available in the Library of Congress to updating these two volumes, and to bringing the story of the Sikhs to the present times. It also provided me with a research assistant, Dr Surjit Kaur, who helped me lay my hands on material on the Sikh community in North America and who arranged interviews for me. To my friend Satindra Singh I owe thanks for scrutinizing my text, checking my facts, and suggesting deletions. Above all, I would like to record my gratitude to my niece, Geetanjali Chanda, who put all the writing through the word-processor, cross-checked references, and corrected and edited the seven chapters. Without her help I would not have been able to complete my assignment in the short time available to me.

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PART I

FALL OF THE SIKH KINGDOM

'What does the red colour stand for?' asked Maharajah Ranjit Singh when he was shown a map of India. 'Your Majesty,' replied the cartographer, 'red marks the extent of British possessions'. The maharajah scanned the map with his single eye and saw nearly the whole of Hindustan except the Punjab painted red. He turned to his courtiers and remarked: '*Ek roz sab lāl ho jāigā*—one day it will all be red.'

It took only ten years for the maharajah's prophecy to be fulfilled.

Ranjit Singh's successors were not possessed of the qualities of leadership: their main preoccupation was to secure the throne for themselves by liquidating their rivals. The court split into different factions. The poisoned cup of wine, the concealed dagger, and the carbine took their toll of royal blood; the rabble slaughtered each other in the streets. The Punjabis became dispirited and disunited. Dogra Hindus contended for power with the Sikhs; Muslims became indifferent. Administration broke down. The army grew to a size which the state's revenues could not finance; it became mutinous and ultimately took over the functions of the state.

The English, who had anticipated the chaos that would follow the death of Ranjit Singh, began to move troops up to the frontier and to meddle in the internal affairs of the Durbar. By the autumn of 1845 they were ready to invade the Punjab. They defeated the Sikhs in a series of engagements, annexed Jullundur Doab, and gave Jammu and Kashmir to Gulab Singh Dogra.

Three years later the English allowed a minor revolt in Multan to spread over the province, and utilized it as a pretext to annex the rest of the kingdom. As Ranjit Singh had foreseen, by the spring of 1849, the map of nearly the whole of India had become red.

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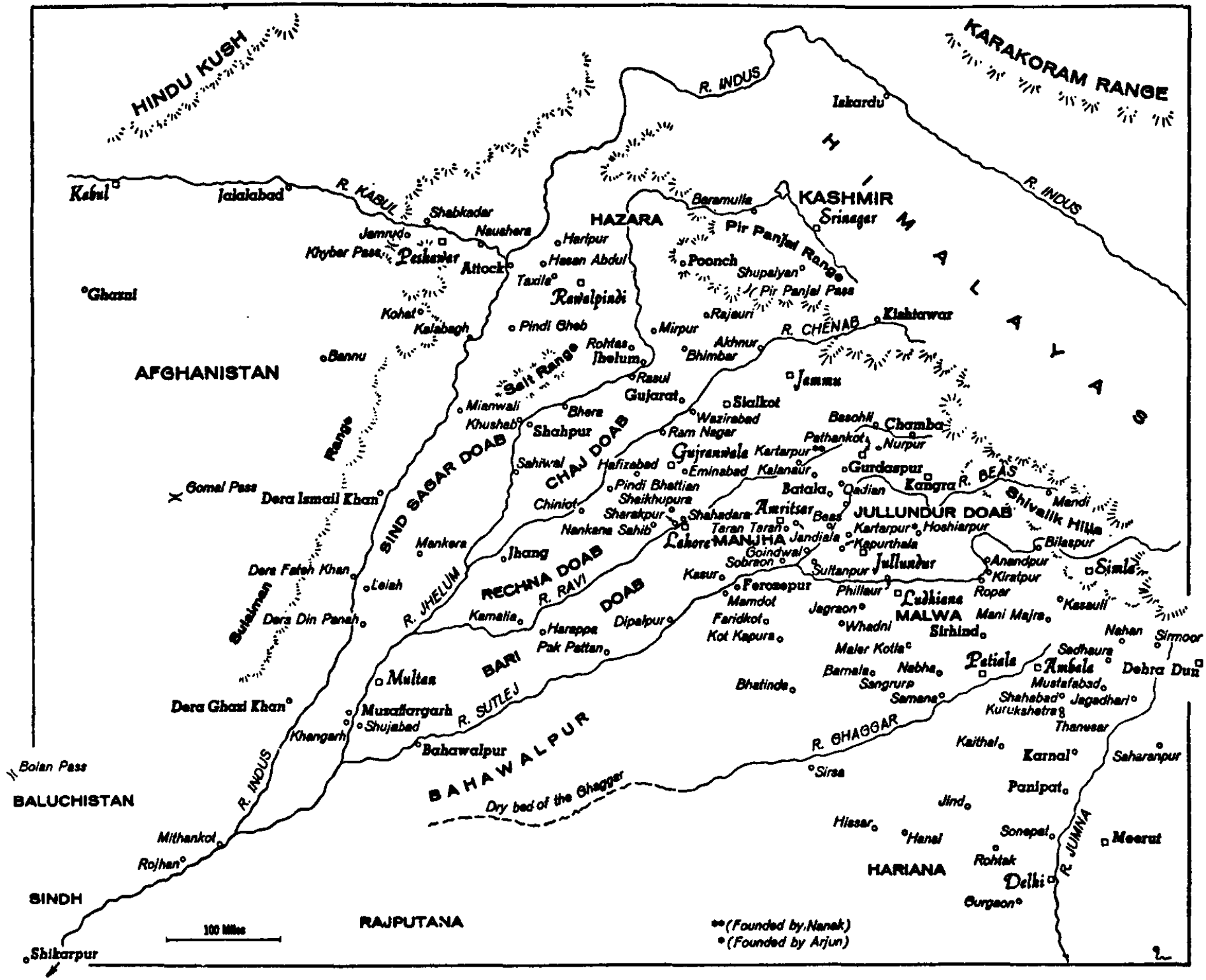
1. The Punjab on the Death of Ranjit Singh

Ranjit Singh, maharajah of the Punjab, died on the afternoon of the 27th of June, 1839. In the forty years that he ruled, he hammered warring Sikh factions into one and welded people of diverse loyalties into a nation; and he made the nation strong and prosperous. Guru Nanak's mission of bringing the Hindus and Muslims together and Guru Gobind Singh's endeavour to raise a warlike fraternity had succeeded. The Punjab was no longer a cockpit for foreign armies contending for the sovereignty of Hindustan; on the contrary, it had become not only the strongest Indian power but also one of the most powerful states in Asia. After many centuries of domination by Pathans and Afghans, the Punjabis had reversed the roles by extending their kingdom across the Pathan country and becoming arbiters of the destiny of the throne of Kabul. They had overcome Chinese satellites in Tibet and stopped British expansion to the west. No longer did the invader dare to set foot in the Punjab, to trample over the young wheat or plunder the peasantry when the harvest was gathered in. Highways had been made safe; once again caravans from Central Asia and Hindustan exchanged their wares in the markets of the Punjab. All this had been achieved by the people of the Punjab under the leadership of a man who had risen from their midst.

Ranjit Singh was like a massive banyan tree which cast its shadow over the whole of the Punjab; and like the banyan he had sheltered the land beneath him to such an extent that nothing but



THE PUNJAB IN 1809

weeds could thrive in it. Consequently, when he died there was no one of sufficient stature to step into his shoes and guide the destinies of the state. This applied particularly to the people who were close to Ranjit Singh: members of his family and favourites at court whom he had raised from rustic obscurity to power, from modest circumstances to wealth beyond their imagination.

Ranjit Singh left seven sons. Since they were born of different women, the emotions that determined their attitude towards each other were fratricidal rather than fraternal. The eldest, Kharak Singh, who had been invested as the future maharajah, was the least suited to rule the Punjab.[1] He was an indolent, easy-going debauchee with neither the restless energy that had animated his illustrious father nor the down-to-earth simplicity that had endeared his predecessor to the masses. Kharak Singh was, however, not unwilling to leave the tedium of administration to more willing hands, especially to a favourite, Chet Singh Bajwa, who was related to him through his wife. Kharak Singh's son, Nao Nihal Singh, was cast in a different mould: ambitious, enterprising, and endowed with a pleasant personality.

Ranjit Singh's second son, Sher Singh, was also ambitious and affable. He based his claim on being born of Ranjit Singh's first wedded wife. Kharak Singh refuted the contention and asserted that he (Kharak Singh) was the only legitimate son of his father, the others—Sher Singh, Tara Singh, Kashmira Singh, Peshaura Singh, Multana Singh, and Dalip Singh—were of doubtful paternity.

The council of ministers and the nobility at the court were as divided as the princes. Two major factions emerged soon after the death of Ranjit Singh. The more influential was that of the Dogras, consisting of the three brothers, Gulab Singh, Dhian Singh, and Suchet Singh, and Dhian Singh's son, Hira Singh, who had been a great favourite of the late maharajah. Although the brothers were not always united in their purpose, one or the other member of the family managed to be in power at Lahore,

1 'Besides being a block-head, he was a worse opium eater than his father,' wrote the royal physician, J. M. Honigberger. *Thirty-Five Years in the East*, p. 101.

while Gulab Singh converted his fief in Jammu into an almost independent Dogra kingdom.

Opposed to the Dogras were the Sikh aristocracy, of which three families—the Sandhawalias, Attariwalas, and the Majithias—were the most prominent. Since the Dogras were Hindus and the Sikh aristocrats were Khalsa, differences between them often assumed a communal aspect of Dogra versus Sikh.

There was among the coterie of self-seekers a small number of men who refused to align themselves with either faction and continued to serve the Durbar as faithfully and honestly as circumstances permitted. Outstanding among them were the Fakir brothers, notably the eldest, Azizuddin, who continued to be the adviser on foreign affairs, and the Kashmiri Brahmin, Dina Nath, who administered the departments of revenue and finance.

In the scramble for power, the decisive factor was the support of the army: rival factions tried to win over the soldiers by offering higher wages and gifts, and appealing to their sense of patriotism. Seeds of indiscipline had been sown by Maharajah Ranjit Singh himself when he expanded and modernized the army in 1822. All his conquests had by then been made. Subsequent military campaigns yielded neither profitable territory nor booty to meet the cost of expansion of the army. As a result, payments to the soldiers fell in arrears: some units remained unpaid for over two years. After Ranjit's death, when civil administration deteriorated and provincial governors became tardy in remitting revenues, the army was compelled to reimburse itself. Soldiers acquired the habit of looting civilians and selling their services to the highest bidder. They began to disobey their officers. (Officers had independent incomes and little identity of economic interest with their men.) Officers who tried to assert their authority were manhandled and even murdered. The men resorted to the practice of electing *pañces* (elders) to negotiate for terms of service. They left their units without permission to attend family functions or to help their brethren gather in the harvest. The most unfortunate result of the mutinous attitude of the troopers was to make the foreign officers very nervous. Many left the service of the Durbar; most

of those who remained sent their money and jewels to banks in India and showed no reluctance in furnishing information to British agents.

With the loosening of central authority, the governors of the outlying provinces began to toy with the idea of becoming independent rulers. Gulab Singh Dogra started expanding his domain at the expense of the Durbar. Muslim tribes, particularly the Yusufzais around Hazara and the Baluchis between the Jhelum and the Indus, became restive. As the Durbar's authority weakened, the British began to mature their plans of stepping in. Their involvement in Afghanistan precluded for some time direct intervention in the Punjab. But as soon as affairs in Afghanistan were settled, they resumed their expansionist policy.

Maharajah Kharak Singh and Prince Nao Nihal Singh

Squabbling among the courtiers began while Ranjit Singh's body lay on the floor of the palace bedroom awaiting cremation.[2] Maharajah Kharak Singh assuaged their fears by assuring them that their *jāgīrs* would not be touched. But his relations with his brother Sher Singh[3] continued to be tense for some time. Sher

2 The chief courtiers foregathered in the palace and agreed unanimously that 'no confidence could be placed in Koonwar Kharak Singh Bahadur and Koonwar Nao Nihal Singh Bahadur as regards the continuance of the estates in their possession.' The next day after the cremation they came to the palace and again desired the heir-apparent 'to console them (the noblemen) by a solemn oath on the Granth that the grants respectively conferred on them by the late maharajah should be continued to them.' *Panjāb Akhbār*, 27 and 28 June 1839.

3 Sher Singh approached the British and pressed his 'superior' claim to the throne. He was quickly rebuffed by Lord Auckland. Government to Clerk, 12 July 1839.

Sher Singh had kept away from his dying father's bedside because he suspected that Kharak Singh would take the opportunity to seize him. (*Panjāb Akhbār*, 26 June 1839.) When he heard of his father's death he repaired to his estate in Batala and had the message conveyed to the Durbar that he would not attend the obsequies unless he was guaranteed immunity from arrest.

at the same time, 'Take this in the memory of Maharajah Ranjit Singh.'

Maharajah Kharak Singh meekly submitted to his audacious son. Nao Nihal Singh occupied the palace in the fort and became the maharajah of the Punjab in all but name.[11] His attitude to his father changed from obstreperousness to filial propriety.[12] He let all the ceremonial functions remain the prerogative of his father while he attended to administrative matters. He had it conveyed to the ministers, governors of provinces, and generals, who had grown accustomed to being left to themselves by the ailing Ranjit Singh and the lackadaisical Kharak Singh, that he meant to govern the Punjab personally and effectively. They soon began to chafe under the prince's iron rule. But the prince gained the support of the British by overruling his counsellors and allowing British troops in Afghanistan to return through the Punjab.[13] Within a couple of months the Punjab felt as if the spirit of Ranjit Singh had been resurrected in the person of his grandson, Nao Nihal Singh.

11 SC 52 of 1.6.1840.

12 Later, Nao Nihal Singh tried to get absolution from his father for his part in the murder of Bajwa. Kharak Singh continued to chafe at the deprivation of power occasionally remarking, 'I am not an idiot.' He tried to flee from Lahore but was apprehended by the prince and Dhian Singh Dogra and brought back to Lahore. SC 232 of 18.5.1840.

13 SC 40 of 20.11.1839. The British government did not honour the terms of the Treaty of Lahore 1809 (Appendix 6, Vol. I) and again pressed the Durbar to let reinforcements cross the Punjab on their way to Kabul. Nao Nihal Singh realized the folly of putting all his eggs in the British basket. He is said to have opened negotiations with Amir Dost Mohammed. He also ordered defensive fortifications to be erected at Kasur to prevent British invasion from Ferozepur, which was reported to have been heavily refortified. Despite British objections, the Gurkha general, Matabar Singh, was allowed to continue residing in Lahore.

The Durbar also felt aggrieved with Colonel Wade, who refused to treat Nao Nihal as the de facto ruler of Lahore. This was conveyed to Sir John Keane, the commander of the British force returning from Kabul. A few weeks later, when Colonel Wade himself passed through Lahore, he was not allowed to call on Maharajah Kharak Singh. The governor general realized that Colonel Wade had become persona non grata with the Durbar and in April 1840 ordered Mr Clerk to take over.

Nao Nihal Singh's troubles came from the Dogras. Early in May 1840, General Zorawar Singh Dogra reported from Iskardu that in consequence of the disaffection of the people with their ruler, Ahmed Shah, he had intervened and put Ahmed Shah's son, Mohammed Shah, on the throne and was himself firmly established at Iskardu.[14] Nao Nihal Singh, while approving of the acquisition of territory, did not want the Dogras to become king-makers in Little Tibet, and he issued orders for the reinstatement of Ahmed Shah, on condition that he send tribute to Lahore. Zorawar Singh turned to his immediate overlord, Gulab Singh Dogra, and the two devised ways of circumventing the prince's orders without openly flouting them.

The prince realized that the Dogras had become inconveniently powerful. A considerable part of their wealth came from the exploitation of the salt mines, over which they exercised a monopoly. The prince wanted to terminate the monopoly so that the people could acquire salt more cheaply.[15] Before he could take any steps in this direction, however, Gulab Singh Dogra incited his neighbour, the raja of Mandi, to revolt against the Durbar. Nao Nihal Singh ordered two officers known to be hostile to the Dogras, Ajit Singh Sandhawalia and Ventura, to bring Mandi to obedience. This was accomplished, and Durbar troops brought the Mandi raja as prisoner to Amritsar. Ventura established a chain of police posts in the hills. Under instructions from Nao Nihal Singh he abolished arbitrary taxes levied by the petty rajas and prohibited the sale of children and women—a practice common among the poorer sections of the hill people. Ventura's campaign subdued the hillmen for a little while.

During the summer of 1840 the cannons of the fort of Lahore were kept busy firing salvos in honour of victories gained by Punjabi armies over the Dogra-supported hill people. Relations with the British were friendly; the Afghans did not matter very much. The countryside was peaceful. The people felt that the old days of glory had returned. But the summer's victories were like a lambent flame flickering to its death.

14 *Panjāb Akhbār*, 8 May 1840.
15 Ibid., 20 May 1840.

The rot began at the top and spread to the entire body politic. Maharajah Kharak Singh, who had lapsed into utter idleness, began to drink more excessively and to consume large quantities of opium till he was reduced to a state of imbecility. On the morning of 5 November 1840, he succumbed to an attack of dysentery and high fever. At his cremation two of his wives mounted the pyre to commit *satī*. They made Nao Nihal Singh and Dhian Singh Dogra put their hands on the dead maharajah's chest and swear by all that they held most sacred to serve the state loyally and faithfully.

Fate had ordained otherwise. Nao Nihal Singh consigned the body of Maharajah Kharak Singh and his consorts to the flames, dismissed the mourners, and made his way back to the palace. As he was passing under the gateway which gave access to the fort, the arch gave way, and slabs of stone and masonry crashed down on his head. A son of Gulab Singh Dogra was killed on the spot. Several others, including Dhian Singh Dogra and Dewan Dina Nath, received injuries. Nao Nihal Singh's skull was fractured.[16]

16 Many English writers, including Cunningham, Gardner (who claimed to be an eyewitness), Steinbach, and Carmichael Smyth, have expressed the opinion that the fall of the archway was contrived by Dhian Singh Dogra. This has been eagerly taken up by Sikh historians Prem Singh and Dr Ganda Singh, who ascribe the downfall of the Sikh reigning family to Dogra-Hindu machinations. There is little evidence to support this theory, particularly in view of the fact that Dhian Singh himself suffered some injury and lost his nephew. Despite rumours, Gulab Singh never held his brother responsible for the death of Udham Singh. The Hungarian doctor Honigberger, who was in Lahore at the time and treated the prince and the minister, is quite certain that the fall of the arch was accidental. (See Honigberger, pp. 102–5.) He is supported by Sohan Lal Suri in *Umdāt-ut-Tawārīkh*, IV, 70–1.

The *Intelligence Report* from Lahore states:
'This day—[5th November] about 9 o'clock a.m. Maharajah Khurruk Singh expired. His corpse was burnt with Rannee Isur Koonwur, sister of Surdar Mungal Singh and three slave girls. After this, while Koonwur Nownihal Singh was going through the gate of the palace a beam of wood accidentally fell upon his head and upon Meean Oodum Singh. The latter died instantly but Koonwur Nownihal Singh survived in agony a few hours.' SC 116 of 7.12.1840.

Dhian Singh Dogra had the unconscious Nao Nihal Singh removed to the palace, and, though there was little doubt that life was fast ebbing out, he had it bruited about that the prince was well on the way to recovery. When Nao Nihal Singh died[17] a few hours later, the chief minister ordered that the news of the death be withheld till the matter of the succession had been settled. After consulting the senior members of the council, he invited Prince Sher Singh to come to Lahore immediately. There is little doubt that Sher Singh was the fittest person to succeed to the throne; he was popular with the army, courteous, and amiable; and the English, whose opinions were of consequence in the Durbar's affairs, were known to approve of him.

Dhian Singh Dogra's plans were upset by his rivals in the council, who decided to support Kharak Singh's widow, Chand Kaur,[18] and sent word to her and her Sandhawalia kinsmen to come to Lahore at once.

Dhian Singh Dogra tried frantically to get some sort of agreement from Chand Kaur before the intriguers' brew came

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The British agent, Clerk, in his report written on 7 November 1840, and in a memorandum written two years later, supports General Ventura's opinion that this was an accident.

The facts themselves do not allow for any doubt on the subject. Kharak Singh died early in the morning and was cremated a few hours later on a spot which was alongside a public thoroughfare. It is highly improbable that anyone could, in broad daylight, have been able to set up a contraption by which an arch could come down on a given signal.

The subject has been dealt with by Dr G. L. Chopra in a paper entitled 'The Death of Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh' published by the *Indian Historical Records Commission*, Vol. 18, 1942, pp. 29–33. Dr Chopra holds the view that the fall of the archway was accidental.

17 Gardner, an extremely unreliable witness, states that when Nao Nihal Singh was brought into the palace there was only a trickle of blood from his ear, but when the colonel saw him again a little later, the floor of the room was full of blood. He suggests that the prince was battered to death by Dhian Singh's hirelings, two of whom soon paid the penalty of knowing too much by being murdered; two others fled to British India and one was never heard of again. *Memoirs of Alexander Gardner*, p. 225.

18 Chand Kaur was the daughter of Jaimal Singh of the Kanhaya misl. She was married to Kharak Singh in 1821.

to a boil. He temporarily succeeded in persuading her to accept the honorific of a queen, with Sher Singh as the *afsar kalan* (chief adviser). He summoned the British agent, and in the presence of all the courtiers asked him to convey to his government that the arrangement had been 'adopted by the whole Khalsa in concord and unanimity.'[19] A few hours after the meeting Prince Sher Singh arrived in Lahore. The death of Nao Nihal Singh was made known, and the succession of Sher Singh was proclaimed.

In the afternoon Nao Nihal Singh's body was taken to the spot where his father's ashes still smouldered. Two of the prince's consorts mounted the pyre with him. One pinned the royal aigrette on Sher Singh's turban; the other daubed Dhian Singh Dogra's forehead with saffron to signify that he was chief minister. Before they perished, the satīs made the prince and the minister swear loyalty to the state.

Maharani Chand Kaur and Maharajah Sher Singh

It did not take Chand Kaur very long to recover from the shock of the deaths of her husband and son. She exploited the sympathy that the tragedy had generated and staked her claim to the crown.[20] She sent for Gulab Singh Dogra from Jammu to counteract his brother, Dhian Singh's, influence. Dhian Singh suggested many compromises. She could marry Sher Singh or, being childless, adopt Sher Singh's son, Pratap Singh. Chand Kaur spurned the offer of marriage. How could she marry a man whom she described as *sheroo cobā*—the bastard son of a dyer? She parried the suggestion of adopting Pratap by offering instead to adopt Dhian Singh Dogra's son, Hira Singh. She also had it noised about that one of Nao Nihal Singh's widows was pregnant. Dhian Singh did his best to bring her to reason. He placed his turban at her feet and implored her to accept the title of 'queen dowager' with Sher Singh as the head of a council of

19 SC 79 of 23.11.1840.
20 SC 116 of 7.12.1840.

regency. Chand Kaur tore up the proposal. In a stormy scene in the Durbar, Dhian Singh warned Chand Kaur of the danger of lending an ear to mischiefmongers. He told her that the government of the Punjab did not depend either on her or on Sher Singh or any of the claimants in the royal family, because it was the government of the entire Khalsa.[21] Gloom spread over the country; soothsayers predicted the doom of the Khalsa government in the year 1840.[22]

A few days later, two Sandhawalia Sardars, Ajit Singh and Attar Singh, arrived in Lahore and took over control. On 2 December 1840, Chand Kaur was proclaimed maharani of the Punjab with the title *malikā mukaddas*—revered empress. The next day Sher Singh left Lahore for his estate in Batala. A month later Dhian Singh Dogra too was compelled to quit the capital. Chand Kaur and the Sandhawalias gained complete control of the administration.

The dice were heavily loaded against Chand Kaur. The Punjabis were unable to reconcile themselves to being ruled by a woman who could not leave the veiled seclusion of the zenana.[23] And Chand Kaur proved to be singularly inept in the art of diplomacy; she was vain, ill-tempered, and given to using language that became a bazaar woman more than a maharani.

21 SC 116 of 7.12.1840. 'Raja Dhian Singh is indefatigable and firm.... He at this crisis has upheld the tottering Khalsa.'

22 SC 117 of 7.12.1840. This was based on one of the many spurious versions of the *sau sākhī*—the hundred fables—ascribed to Guru Gobind Singh. It prophesied great misfortune to the *Khālsā sarkār* in Sambat 1897 (AD 1840) and its restoration the following year by the reincarnated spirit of Hari Singh Nalwa.

23 Bedi Bikram Singh of Una, who had come to Lahore to carry out the investiture, stated categorically that 'he had come to give the *tikkā* (saffron mark) to Kanwar Sher Singh and not to a woman, for no woman had, or could ever, reign at Lahore.' The *Māi* sent word to the Bedi that he had better take care of himself. SC 107 of 21.12.1840.

Panjab Intelligence of 7 December, states: 'The Mai sits in the Sum-mum Burj to hold her durbar behind a purdah with five or six other women, the chiefs of the council... sit outside the purdah and give their opinions.' SC 104 of 28.12.1840.

The chief problem of the *Māī*—mother, as Chand Kaur came to be known among the people—was the loyalty of the army. Sher Singh was popular with the troops and the European officers. He offered the troops an increase in wages. Desertions to the prince's camp began on a large scale. Most of the crack regiments went over to him, and the Mai's men were refused access to the magazine. Within a fortnight of her assumption of power, the Mai had to have two battalions posted inside the fort to protect her person. The state of uncertainty encouraged lawless elements in the countryside. The English started movements of troops towards the Sutlej.[24]

Sher Singh decided to seize power from the feeble hands of the widow and save the Punjab from disintegration. He sent an envoy to Mr Clerk at Ludhiana to obtain English reactions to his bid for the throne. The British were bogged down in Afghanistan and were in dire need of help. In the anglophile Sher Singh they saw a potential ally and gave him assurance of support.[25]

Sher Singh arrived at Lahore at the head of an army composed of deserters who had flocked to his colours; most of the Durbar's European officers were with him.

The Mai did not lose heart. She appointed Gulab Singh Dogra as the commander-in-chief and charged him with the task of defending the city. She cleared four months of arrears in the soldiers' wages and lavished presents of gold bangles, necklaces, jewels, and shawls on the officers. She issued orders to the city's bankers forbidding them to lend money to Sher Singh. These measures had the reverse effect. The troops sensed her

24 The attitude of the British towards their allies, who had not only helped them to win the war in Afghanistan but were allowing their territory to be used by British armies as if it were a common highway, can be gauged by the correspondence that passed between Sir William Macnaghten and the governor general in Calcutta. Macnaghten proposed that the treaty of 1839 be unilaterally declared by the British to be null and void and Peshawar be added to the Durrani kingdom. (Macnaghten to governor general, 26 November 1840; governor general to Macnaghten, 28 December 1840.)

He also suggested that the Punjab be further divided into two: the hills to be administered by the Dogras and the plains by the Sandhawalias.

25 SC 66 of 1.2.1841 and SC 93 of 22.8.1841.

nervousness and felt that she was again trying to win a lost cause by bribery. Sher Singh had little money, but he was able to infuse confidence that his was the winning side and he would be able to redeem his promise of a permanent increase of Re 1 per month in the wages of the troops as well as reward those who joined them. The regiments stationed outside the city walls went over in a body. Sher Singh had 26,000 infantry, 8000 horses, and 45 guns. The Mai was left with only 5000 men, a few guns, and a limited quantity of gunpowder.

Sher Singh forced his way into the city. He made a belated proclamation[26] assuring safety of life and property to the citizens and offered pardon to those who would come over to him. The leading courtiers made their submission and forwarded a joint appeal to the Mai and Gulab Singh Dogra to lay down arms.

The Mai, supported by Gulab Singh Dogra, refused to surrender, and the battle was joined. For two days Sher Singh's artillery shelled the fort, and the guns of the fort poured death and destruction on the bazaars lying beneath the ramparts. On the evening of 17 January 1841, Dhian Singh Dogra arrived and arranged a ceasefire. The Mai was persuaded to accept a handsome jagir and relinquish her pretensions to the throne.[27] Sher Singh undertook to show her the respect due to a brother's widow and to pardon the men who had sided with her. Her short reign of a month and a half was over. At midnight Gulab Singh and his Dogras evacuated the fort—taking with them all the Durbar's hoard of gold and jewels kept at Lahore.[28] Ajit Singh

26 'In the kingdom of Guru Ram Das (the 4th Sikh guru who was born at Lahore) by the orders of Maharajah Sher Singh Bahadur, it is proclaimed that anyone touching the property of the people shall be severely punished.' SC 60 of 1.2.1841. This proclamation was made after the troops had looted many bazaars and helped themselves to the wine cellars of the officers.

27 SC 97 of 8.2.1841. Latif's version of the agreement is somewhat different. *History of the Punjab*, p. 506.

28 SC 88 of 8.2.1841. Gulab Singh Dogra had made immunity from search of himself and his men an absolute condition for the surrender of the fort. The Mai reposing her trust in him appointed him agent of her estate in Kudi Kuddiali, which adjoined Gulab Singh's territories.

Sandhawalia fled to seek help from the British agent at Ludhiana. On Mr Clerk's refusal to receive him, he proceeded to Calcutta to see the governor general. Attar Singh Sandhawalia followed him into British territory.

Sher Singh occupied the fort and was invested with the title of the maharajah of the Punjab.[29] Dhian Singh Dogra was proclaimed chief minister.

Sher Singh's rule began badly. He was unable to redeem his promise to the troops, who continued looting the bazaars. Soldiers went berserk, murdering regimental accountants and officers whom they suspected of having embezzled their wages or having dealings with the English. Sher Singh and Dhian Singh Dogra invited two men each from every company, troop, and gun to the palace and heard their grievances. They agreed to dismiss corrupt accountants but refused to agree to the panches' demand to transfer officers they did not like; the meeting became stormy. The weak-willed Sher Singh threw up his hands with the remark, *kacā pakkā sambhālo* (literally, 'raw or ripe, it's yours'), which gave the panches to understand that they were free to settle things for themselves.[30]

Maharajah Sher Singh belied the hopes of his many admirers. With the army in open mutiny, the best he could do was to plead with the men to be reasonable and give them whatever money he had: in the first six months of his rule he parted with nearly 95 lacs of rupees to the soldiers. Even this did not appease the men, who threatened to depose him. Instead of facing them resolutely, Sher Singh sought escape in the cup, the company of

29 The formal *tilak* ceremony was performed on 27 January 1841, by Bikram Singh Bedi of Una. Pratap Singh was proclaimed as the heir-apparent. SC 95 of 8.2.1841.

30 Carmichael Smyth, *History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, p. 87. Two Europeans, Colonel Foulkes and Major Ford, were shot dead; Court barely escaped with his life; Ventura's house had to be guarded; Avitabile asked the British agent in Peshawar to help him escape to Europe; Colonel Meehan Singh, the governor of Kashmir, and Sobha Singh, garrison commander of Amritsar, were murdered; Jemadar Khushal Singh, his nephew Tej Singh, and Lehna Singh Majithia had to barricade themselves in their houses.

courtesans—and the Mai.[31] What the Punjab had prayed for was a dictator. What it got was a handsome and well-meaning dandy who knew more about French wines and perfumes than he did about statecraft.

The attitude of the British government towards Sher Singh's succession was somewhat ambivalent. The governor general recognized him as ruler of the Punjab but at the same time gave asylum to Ajit Singh Sandhawalia[32] and did nothing to prevent him from raising troops to invade the Punjab.

Sordid tales of the goings on in the palace destroyed whatever respect the people retained for the Durbar. The British added to its discomfiture by refusing to accord it the respect due to a sovereign state. The most flagrant case was the abuse of hospitality by Major Broadfoot. Broadfoot was permitted to escort the seraglios of Shah Zaman and Shah Shuja across the Punjab to Afghanistan and was provided with an escort of Mussalman troops. The major's attitude was aggressive from the very start, and on more than one occasion he ordered his men to open fire on the Punjabis who happened to come near his party. The Durbar suffered this kind of behaviour—and worse. When Broadfoot had crossed the Indus, he called on the Pathan tribesmen to revolt against the Durbar.[33]

31 On 24 January 1841, an old chief made the suggestion in open durbar that Sher Singh should take his brother's widow under his protection (*cādar aṅdāzī*) by marrying her. SC 97 of 8.3.1841.

Chand Kaur met a tragic end; she was murdered by her maidservants on the night of 11 June 1842. The culprits were apprehended but before they could divulge the motives of their crime, their tongues were cut off and they were executed by the order of Dhian Singh Dogra. This has led historians such as Prem Singh to point the accusing finger towards the Dogra (*Maharajah Sher Singh*, pp. 163–70). Cunningham accuses Sher Singh of the crime (p. 261). The murder is referred to by Clerk in his letter to his government dated 15 June 1842.

32 SC 89 of 8.2.1841.

33 'It did not appear that his (Broadfoot's) apprehension had even a plausible foundation.... The whole proceeding merely served to irritate and excite the distrust of the Sikhs generally, and to give Sher Singh an opportunity of pointing out to his mutineer soldiers that the Punjab was

The Broadfoot episode, following many cases of betrayal of national interest by courtiers, noblemen, and officers, forced the men of the Punjab army to make their own voice heard in matters of state. The only institution with which they were familiar was the *pañcāyat*—the council of elders—which regulated the affairs of the villages from which they came. This institution had been introduced in the army, and each regiment had begun to elect its own pañces, whose duty was to deliberate on the orders of the commanding officer and then to make their recommendations to the men. In the army, the pañcāyats did not develop into a proper administrative system, and much depended on the ability of the elected men. In order to maintain their influence the pañces often pressed for concessions and increases in wages which were unreasonable. Some senior pañces became powerful

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surrounded by English armies both ready and willing to make war upon them.' Capt. J. D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs* (1st edition, p. 245).

The following lines from a personal letter written by Mrs Henry Lawrence on 26 May 1841 (when the Punjab armies were helping the British), is indicative of the British frame of mind: 'Wars, rumours of war, are on every side and there seems no doubt that *the next cold weather will decide the long suspended question of occupying the Punjab:* Henry, both in his civil and military capacity, will probably be called to take part in whatever goes on.' (Emphasis added.)

Lord Ellenborough's letter to the Duke of Wellington dated 15 October 1841, is equally revealing. 'I have requested Lord Fitzroy to appoint him [Lieutenant Durand] at once in obtaining all information he can with respect to the Punjab and making a memorandum upon the country for your consideration. I am most anxious to have your opinion as to the general principles upon which a campaign against the country should be conducted.' He followed Durand's memo with another letter dated 26 October stating, 'At present about 12,000 men are collected at Ferozepur to watch the Sikhs and act if necessary.'

'What I desired therefore was your opinion founded as far as it could be upon imperfect geographical information which could be given to you, as to the *best mode of attacking the Punjab.*' Ganda Singh, *Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars,* p. 47.

English papers published in India made frequent allusions to the designs of the British government against the Punjab. Maharajah Sher Singh protested about them to Maddock, who led a British mission to the Durbar. SC 5 of 15.1.1843.

enough to be able to auction posts of officers; they appointed deputies (*kar pañces*) to convey their decisions to the troops and ensure their acceptance. The results were disastrous. The army lost its discipline as well as direction by officers who had greater experience in military affairs.

While the Durbar at Lahore was preoccupied with pacifying its mutinous soldiery and helping the British out of their predicament in Afghanistan, the Dogras began the second phase of the conquest of Tibet.

There were economic reasons for extending the frontiers of Jammu and the valley of the Jhelum (which Gulab Singh Dogra had occupied on the murder of its governor) beyond the Himalayas. Since the British had extended their frontiers to the Sutlej, Tibetan caravans which had passed through Kashmir began instead to go through Bushair. The Kashmiri shawl makers, who obtained much of their raw wool from Ladakh and Lhasa, suffered most. There was danger of the Kashmir wool industry dying out. Besides this, Rohtak district of the province of Garo was reputed to be rich in gold, borax, sulphur, and rock salt, and had a thriving market which supplied many parts of Central Asia. There were complementary political reasons for the expansion. By striking out north and then eastwards, the Punjab could establish a common frontier with the only other independent state of India, Nepal, and thus guard itself against the possibility of British encirclement.

Zorawar Singh Dogra had taken Ladakh in 1834 and then driven the wedge a little farther by capturing Iskardu, on the junction of two tributaries of the Indus. Another approach route to these mountainous regions had been opened up by the occupation of Mandi and Kulu. The Dogra general decided to press these points further; one northwards and the other eastwards towards the Nepalese frontier.

It was not difficult to find an excuse for aggression. In April 1841, Zorawar Singh demanded Garo's adhesion to the Punjab on the grounds that Garo was a dependency of Iskardu and Iskardu was now a province of the Punjab. In view of the changed

circumstances he also desired that Lhasa should pay tribute to Lahore rather than to Peking. Zorawar Singh marched to Garo while another column proceeded eastwards along the Kumaon hills and cut off British contact with Lhasa. In June 1841 the Dogras captured Garo. Zorawar Singh thought it politic to send information of the fact to the raja of Bushair, who was under British protection. From Garo, the Dogras marched forward towards Tuklakote. A Tibetan force sent to oppose them was annihilated, and a few days later the Durbar's flag was hoisted at Tuklakote. The Dogras had pierced the heart of Tibet to its very core. By the time they were able to consolidate their new conquests, the campaigning season in the mountains was over.

This brilliant feat of arms alarmed the British,[34] and their agent demanded that the Durbar give up its new conquests.[35] While the verbal warfare was going on between Ludhiana and Lahore, the Chinese mustered their armies. With the first fall of snow they encircled the Dogra advanced posts, cut off their supply lines, and waited patiently for the elements to do the rest.

The Dogras were reduced to desperate straits. They were marooned at a height of 12,000 feet in the midst of a vast sea of drifting snow and ice. They ran out of food and fuel, and soldiers began to die of frostbite. Zorawar Singh offered to withdraw, but the Chinese were unwilling to let a trapped bird slip out of their grasp. 'You seized Ladakh and we remained silent. You became bold in consequence and took possession of Gartok and Tuklakote. If you desire peace, give up Ladakh and go back to your own country,' was the Chinese reply.[36]

34 SC 71 of 18.10.1841.

35 The tension over Punjabi expansion across the Himalayas did not vitiate other relations between the Durbar and the British. On the request of the British government, the Durbar took steps to regulate duties on merchandise passing to and from British India to the Punjab. The duties on goods entering the Punjab were fixed at reduced rates chargeable at one place. This step had no little effect in promoting commercial traffic between the Punjab and its neighbouring countries.

36 SC 59 of 6.12.1841.

The Dogras were compelled to fight their way out. Hunger and cold had sapped their vitality, and they had to contend with an enemy who not only outnumbered them by ten to one but was also equipped for winter warfare. On 12 December 1841, fell the gallant Zorawar Singh. The rest of the band laid down arms and were butchered in cold blood. Tuklakote was abandoned. Before the spring thaw, the Chinese reoccupied their Tibetan possessions and reinstated their satellites at Iskardu and Ladakh. Only at Leh did the Punjab flag still flutter defiantly in the Tibetan breeze.

Gulab Singh Dogra rushed reinforcements to Ladakh. By the spring of 1842 Dogra troops reached Leh and pushed forward to recapture Ladakh. The advance continued in the form of a pincer movement towards Garo. One column reached the boundary of the district in August 1842 but was dissuaded from proceeding further by a British officer, Lieutenant Cunningham, who happened to be there. The other column decimated a Chinese force sent against it from Lhasa.

On 17 October 1842, the Durbar agent and Gulab Singh's personal representative signed a treaty with the representatives of the Chinese emperor at Lhasa. It was agreed that the boundaries of Ladakh and Lhasa would be considered inviolable by both parties and that the trade, particularly of tea and paśmīnā wool, would, as in the past, pass through Ladakh.[37]

The British were prevented from taking active steps to check the Dogra incursion into Tibet by a sudden turn of events in Afghanistan. In the autumn of 1841, the Afghans rose and destroyed the British army of occupation. Among those who were

37 The British took the earliest opportunity to undo the Treaty of Ladakh. When they sold Kashmir to Gulab Singh in 1846, Captain A. Cunningham, who was sent to settle the northern and eastern boundary of Gulab Singh's domains, had it conveyed to the Chinese and Tibetan merchants that their goods could enter British territories without having to pay duty. Lord Hardinge followed this up with a note to Lhasa informing the Chinese of British suzerainty over Kashmir and suggesting that the old treaty be amended to the effect that trade would not be restricted to the Ladakh route. The Treaty of Lhasa of 1842 was consequently redrafted in August 1846 as desired by the British.

murdered was Sir Alexander Burnes—the chief architect of British expansionism in Sindh, the Punjab, and Afghanistan. The attempt to reinstate Shah Shuja on the throne of Kabul had been a joint Punjabi-British venture, and consequently the disaster which overwhelmed British arms at Kabul could not be overlooked by the Durbar. General Avitabile was ordered to go to the relief of the British.[38] The Punjabis recaptured Ali Masjid but were unable to hold it as the winter set in. As soon as the passes were cleared of snow they resumed their offensive and, with a British contingent, once again occupied Ali Masjid in the spring of 1842.[39] The Durbar arranged for the supply of grain, cattle, and other provisions to British troops and dispatched its own force, which was larger than the British, to Afghanistan. The Punjabis relieved Jalalabad and helped to re-establish British power in Afghanistan. Fortunately for the British, Shah Shuja died (or was killed). They decided to scrap the Tripartite Treaty and make terms with Dost Mohammed. The Amir was released from detention to be sent back to Kabul.

The British behaviour in the Afghan campaign soured Sher Singh. He saw how they had used the Punjab as a stepping stone

38 The British were surprised at the Punjabis' willing cooperation, as their advisers—Wade, Clerk, and Shahamat Ali—had told them that no faith should be placed in the Punjabis' professions of friendship (see *Calcutta Review*, III, 182).

In a letter dated 11 April 1842, Henry Lawrence wrote: 'The Sikhs were only bound to employ a contingent of 6000 men, but they did the work with no less than 15,000, leaving the stipulated number in position, and withdrawing the rest to Jamrood and Peshawar, where they remain ready to support those in the Pass if necessary.' Edwardes and Merivale, *The Life of Henry Lawrence*, I, 363.

39 The governor general, Lord Ellenborough, in an official notification of 19 April expressed his entire satisfaction with the conduct of the troops of Maharajah Sher Singh. He informed the army 'that the loss sustained by the Sikhs in the assault of the Pass which was forced by them is understood to have been equal to that sustained by the troops of Her Majesty to the Government of India.' Ellenborough instructed his agent at Lahore to offer his congratulations on this occasion 'so honourable to the Sikh Army'. Ganda Singh, *Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars*, p. 42.

to reach Afghanistan, and, having done so, scrapped the treaty without considering the Durbar's interests.[40] And soon after the debacle in Afghanistan, the British committed unprovoked aggression against Sindh. Without even waiting for an excuse, Sir Charles Napier occupied the province in March 1843.[41] What guarantee was there that the British would not act in the same way towards the Punjab?

Relations between the Durbar and the British cooled visibly. Sher Singh continued to keep up appearances of friendship but stopped playing second fiddle to the British. He gave Dost Mohammed, who had crossed swords with the Punjabis in innumerable battles, a great reception when he passed through Lahore on his way to Kabul. The Durbar signed a separate treaty recognizing him as the Amir of Afghanistan.

The British sensed that they had through their own maladroitness lost the confidence of Sher Singh. They also felt that as long as Dhian Singh Dogra remained the chief minister there was little chance of the Durbar changing its attitude towards them. Persisting in their pretensions of friendship, they asked Sher Singh to allow the Sandhawalia Sardars, known to be inimical towards Dhian Singh Dogra, to return to the Punjab and have their estates restored to them.[42] The maharajah, who had begun

40 In the winter of 1842, Lord Ellenborough expressed a desire to meet Sher Singh and thank him personally for the part played by the Punjabis in the Afghan campaigns. Sher Singh, who had at first agreed to the meeting, finally excused himself on the flimsy ground of protocol. The governor general had to content himself with shaking hands with Sher Singh's son, the eleven-year-old Pratap Singh, and Dhian Singh Dogra.

41 'The real cause of the chastisement of the Amirs,' says Kaye, 'consisted in the chastisement which the British had received from the Afghans. It was deemed expedient at the stage of the great political journey to show that the British could beat someone, and so it was determined to beat the Amirs of Sindh'. *Calcutta Review,* I, 232.

42 In April 1842, when Clerk met Sher Singh, the maharajah told the British agent that, if the Sandhawalias occupied any of the Durbar's possessions across the Sutlej (Kot Kapura, Akalgarh, Naraingarh or Whadni), passage should be given to his troops to seize them and 'rip open their bellies'. SC 134 of 29.6.1842. Six months later, the same Sher Singh was persuaded by Clerk to welcome back the Sandhawalias.

to chafe under Dhian Singh's domination, accepted the British suggestion. In November 1842, Ajit Singh Sandhawalia arrived at Lahore and was received with open arms by the simple-minded Sher Singh. Other members of the family were also reinstated in their possessions. As was perhaps anticipated, the Sandhawalias became the pro-British, anti-Dogra party in the Durbar.

Dhian Singh Dogra proved to be too strongly entrenched to be removed at the whims of princes or courtiers. The Sandhawalias were compelled to resort to violence—and, in the process, to make a clean sweep of the set-up at Lahore. Whether they acted on their own initiative or on the assurance of support from the British will never be known for in the holocaust that followed all the evidence was drowned in blood.

On 15 September 1843, the first of the month of *Asūj* by the Hindu calendar, it was arranged that Sher Singh would take the salute at a march past and inspect the troops of Ajit Singh Sandhawalia. Sher Singh took his elder son, Pratap Singh, with him and left the child to amuse himself in a nearby garden. After the march past, the Sandhawalia came up to the platform where the maharajah was seated to present a double-barrelled gun of English manufacture which he had brought with him from Calcutta. As the maharajah stretched out his hands to receive the weapon, Ajit Singh pressed the trigger. '*Eh kī dagẖā*—what treachery is this!' cried the unfortunate maharajah before he collapsed. The Sandhawalia's men fell upon Sher Singh's escort; Ajit Singh hacked off the maharajah's head and mounted it on his spear. At the same time Ajit's uncle seized Pratap Singh and severed the boy's neck. He too impaled his victim's head on his spear and joined his nephew. The regicides rode to the city flaunting their trophies. For reasons still unknown, they were admitted into the fort. They sent invitations to the Dogras—Dhian Singh, Hira Singh, and Suchet Singh—to join them. Dhian Singh fell into the trap and came to the fort with a very small escort. He was killed and his bodyguard of 25 was hacked to pieces. When Suchet Singh and Hira Singh, who were encamped a couple of miles outside the city, received news of Dhian Singh's

murder, they immediately sought refuge in the cantonment and appealed to the Khalsa army to avenge the murders.

The Sandhawalias occupied the fort and the palace in the belief that they would now rule the Punjab. They had reckoned without the people.

News of the dastardly crimes sent a wave of horror through Lahore. The army panćes resolved to take the city under their protection and to punish the malefactors, and they chose as their leader Hira Singh, the son of Dhian Singh Dogra. The fort was surrounded. All through the night artillery blasted the ramparts. Next morning Nihangs stormed in through the breaches and captured the citadel. The assassins and 600 of their troops were put to the sword. But Attar Singh Sandhawalia remained. He received the news of the capture of Lahore by the army and fled across the Sutlej, where he was given asylum by the British.[43] Ranjit Singh's youngest son, Dalip Singh, was proclaimed maharajah with Hira Singh Dogra as his chief minister. Real power, however, had passed from the palace to the cantonment.

The Punjab Under the Dogras

The blood bath left the Durbar in a state of exhaustion without lancing it of its malignant factionalism. There was a realignment of courtiers behind the claimants to the throne and the post of

43 The blood bath of 15 and 16 September 1843, must have been foreseen by the British. Lord Ellenborough wrote to the Duke of Wellington on 2 August 1843 (after the Sandhawalias had been in Calcutta for some time), 'The affairs of the Punjab will receive their denouement from the death of Sher Singh.' At the time Sher Singh was a young man and in the best of health.

A very detailed report on the different factions in the Durbar was submitted by Richmond on 5 September 1843. The following lines dealing with the *rapprochement* between Dhian Singh Dogra and Sher Singh are significant: 'The union is but seeming and a few moments under the excitement of passion and of wine may cause an irreparable breach which may end in the death of Sher Singh.' SC 455 of 23.3.1844.

The Anglo-Indian press of Calcutta admitted that although there was no proof of the British government being directly concerned in the murder of Sher Singh, it did 'smell a rat'. *Friend of India*, December 1843.

chief minister. Maharajah Dalip Singh had two stepbrothers, Peshaura Singh and Kashmira Singh, both older than he and anxious to press their claims to the throne; both had private armies of their own. And although Hira Singh Dogra had been named as the chief vazir, his appointment was not unquestioned. Since the maharajah was only seven years old, his mother, the youthful and comely Jindan,[44] assumed the role of queen mother and introduced her brother, Jawahar Singh, into the council as a sort of guardian-cum-adviser. Besides these two, Suchet Singh Dogra felt that he had a stronger claim to be chief vazir than his nephew, Hira Singh. Gulab Singh Dogra[45] supported Suchet Singh.

The relations between the Dogras were further acerbated by the presence of a Brahmin priest, Jalla, who had been companion-tutor to Hira Singh Dogra since the latter's childhood. Jalla was an extremely arrogant man of peevish disposition and soon came to be disliked by everyone; Gulab Singh Dogra and Suchet Singh loathed him more than anyone else.

Palace intrigues consumed the energies of the court and the council, leaving them little time to attend to the day-to-day business of administration. The British felt that they might be called upon to intervene to restore order and began to move troops up to the Sutlej. These troop movements worsened the situation in the Punjab. Many Sardars opened negotiations with the British to have their jagirs confirmed. The danger of external aggression and internal dissension made the army[46] the most powerful element in the state.[47] The legend of Khalsa invincibility

44 Jindan was the daughter of an officer in charge of the royal kennels. She was married to Ranjit Singh in 1835. Dalip Singh was born in September 1837.

45 Suchet Singh Dogra had no son of his own. Gulab Singh persuaded him to adopt his youngest son, Ranbir Singh (also known as Mian Pheenoo). This gave Gulab Singh and his sons a vested interest in the fortunes of Suchet Singh.

46 At the time it numbered 69,500 infantry, 27,575 cavalry, 4130 artillerymen as on 1 October 1843. SC 521 of 23.3.1844.

47 Richmond's report of 13 February 1844, states: 'With regard to the state of feeling in the army, I may observe that every regiment and every

was revived. A man who came to the fore now was one Bhai Bir Singh,[48] a retired soldier turned ascetic who had set up his own gurdwara at village Naurangabad on the Sutlej. In times of national crisis, Sikh soldiers and peasantry began to turn to Bhai Bir Singh for guidance. Attending the bhai was a volunteer army of 1200 musket men and 3,000 horsemen. Over 1500 pilgrims were fed in his kitchen every day.

Hira Singh Dogra tackled the problems facing him with great energy. He dismissed European officers known to be intriguing with the British and sent spies to ascertain details of the military preparations which were being made across the Sutlej.[49] In open court he asked the British *vakīl*—pleader—to explain why his

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body of men, save a few Gurkhas, Afghans and Hindustanis, have virtually thrown aside their obedience to the state and to their officers. The habit of discipline, a sense of self-interest and a vague feeling of deference to the 'Khalsa' keep them united as an armed body for the present.' SC 562 of 23.3.1844.

'We have now to deal with the temporary government of one able man, Raja Gulab Singh, with a large army overbearing and disorganised but never yet beaten; and with the Sikh people without a present leader, but victorious on every side, and capable of any exertion, if their spirit is properly called forth in the support of the mystic Khalsa.' Richmond, 26 September 1843. SC 487 of 23.3.1844.

48 Bir Singh (d.1844) came from tehsil Tarn Taran.

49 *Panjāb Akhbār*, 1 January 1844. Durbar agents succeeded in tampering with the loyalty of British Indian troops on the Sutlej; throughout the winter of 1843–4 there were mutinies of native sepoys in Sindh and on the Sutlej. In Sindh they were occasioned by the reduction in the pay of the troops (after its annexation, Sindh ceased to be a 'foreign station' for the British). On the Sutlej, particularly at Ferozepur, they were the result of the disparity between the pay given by the Company—8½ rupees per month—and that received by the Durbar's troops which was 12½ rupees per month.

Lord Ellenborough was very alarmed at the outbreaks and considered success by the Khalsa in inducing mutiny 'more dangerous than would be its declared hostility'. In another letter written early in 1844, the governor general wrote to the Duke of Wellington 'of the great magnitude of the operations on which we should embark, if we ever should cross the Sutlej. I know it would be of a protracted character'. Colchester, *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough*, p. 425.

government was fortifying Ferozepur and why it had given asylum to Attar Singh Sandhawalia, who was known to have been associated with the murders of the previous maharajah and the chief minister and who was inimical to the present regime. The vakīl protested the goodwill of the British and said he would convey the Durbar's fears to his government.[50] Hira Singh was not satisfied with the explanation and ordered the garrisoning of Kasur (facing Ferozepur) and the strengthening of the defences of Phillaur.

Movements of troops on either side of the frontier spread uneasiness among the people. The rich began to send their money and jewellery to British India, and many families of noblemen fled the Punjab on the pretext of making pilgrimages.

Princes Peshaura Singh and Kashmira Singh took advantage of the state of unrest and proclaimed their right to the throne. Hira Singh asked his uncle, Gulab Singh Dogra, to proceed against the recalcitrant princes at Sialkot. Gulab Singh undertook the expedition with alacrity. (Sialkot adjoined his territory and could be annexed by him.)

The princes put up stout resistance. After they were ejected from Sialkot, they toured through Majha and then joined Bhai Bir Singh at Naurangabad. They whipped up anti-Dogra feeling in the army by pointing out that Hira Singh Dogra had virtually usurped the throne. The pañces called on the chief minister and demanded, among other things, that Dalip Singh be formally installed as maharajah; Peshaura Singh and Kashmira Singh have their estates restored to them; and Dogra contingents that had been brought to Lahore be ordered to return to the hills. Hira Singh Dogra accepted the demands. Dalip Singh was seated on the throne and his uncle Jawahar Singh, who was under detention, was released; Kashmira Singh (who had recovered

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The mutinies at Ferozepur were the subject of dispute between the governor general and the commander-in-chief, in consequence of which Sir Robert Dick was removed from the command on the Sutlej frontier and Major General Walter Gilbert posted in his place. Rait, *Life and Campaigns of Viscount Gough*, I, 351–2.

50 *Panjāb Akhbār*, 19 February 1844.

Sialkot) and Peshaura Singh were received at Lahore and their pensions were guaranteed.

The next to challenge Hira Singh's stewardship was his uncle, Suchet Singh Dogra, who stood high in the favour of Rani Jindan. Suchet Singh arrived, at Lahore and demanded the dismissal of both Hira Singh and Pandit Jalla. The army pañcāyat decided to remain loyal to the chief minister. Suchet Singh fled from Lahore. A column sent in pursuit overtook him and slew him and his escort.

Hira Singh Dogra was not destined to rule in peace. He had hardly finished with his uncle when another danger menaced his position. Attar Singh Sandhawalia, whose hostile activities in British India had been the subject of many protests, crossed the Sutlej into Durbar territory and joined Bhai Bir Singh at Naurangabad.[51] Princes Kashmira Singh and Peshaura Singh also left their estates for Naurangabad; Bhai Bir Singh's camp became the centre of the Sikh revolt against Dogra dominance over the Punjab.

Attar Singh was a formidable foe. He was a kinsman of Ranjit Singh and had served him with distinction. He was considered one of the bravest generals and, in the last few years of Ranjit Singh's life, had become the most powerful of all the Sikh sardars. The British supported him, and even the sons of the late maharajah were willing to acknowledge his claims.

Hira Singh Dogra harangued the soldiers, reminding them that the Sandhawalia had been responsible for the murders of Maharajah Sher Singh, Prince Pratap Singh, and his (Hira Singh's) father Dhian Singh Dogra; that the Sandhawalia had

51 *Intelligence Report*, 4 May 1844. Ellenborough's letter to Queen Victoria dated 10 June 1844, states: 'It is much to be regretted that Uttur Singh should have been permitted to move from Thanesir to the Sutlej with the known object of acting against the Lahore Government. This error of the British agent renders it impossible to protect against the violation of the strict letter of the treaty which was committed by the Sikhs, whose troops were sent to the left bank to intercept Uttur Singh; and, under all the circumstances it has been deemed expedient to make no representation upon the subject but to allow the whole matter to be forgotten.' Colchester, *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough*, p. 129.

been with the English for the last six months and had promised to give the British six annas out of each rupee collected in revenue if his venture succeeded; that Suchet Singh Dogra's widow had financed the revolt with the money her husband had invested in British India; and that Bhai Bir Singh and the princes had unwittingly become tools in the hands of traitors. The army pañces agreed to side with Hira Singh Dogra, and the Durbar troops marched out to Naurangabad.

Bhai Bir Singh tried to bring about a settlement. Whilst the negotiations were going on, the impetuous Sandhawalia lost patience and killed one of the Durbar's emissaries. Durbar artillery blasted the Bhai's camp, killing several hundred men including Attar Singh, Prince Kashmira Singh,[52] and Bhai Bir Singh.

The troops, though victorious, were filled with remorse. They had soiled their hands with the blood of Maharajah Ranjit Singh's family and of a man looked upon as a guru. They turned their wrath against the Dogras. Hira Singh Dogra assuaged their feelings by making offerings in the memory of Bhai Bir Singh and announcing that he might accept conversion to Sikhism.[53] What really saved Hira Singh Dogra was a fresh wave of rumours that the British were ready to invade the Punjab[54] and a small scale rebellion in the state.[55]

52 Prince Peshaura Singh had meanwhile left the bhai's camp and made his submission to the Durbar. He later crossed the Sutlej and was given asylum by the British.

53 *Punjab Intelligence* of 14 May 1844, reported that 'Raja Hira Singh endeavours to keep the soldiers in good humour and promises them much, giving them at the same time presents and honours. The Sikh soldiers took the gifts but said, "We killed our guru and we got two rupees, what sort of men are we?"'

54 The newswriter from Kasauli reported that large quantities of ammunition had been forwarded to Ludhiana and Ferozepur; reports from Ferozepur said that zamindars had been advised not to sow an autumn crop as a very large army was to assemble there; stocking of war material in the cantonments and examination of fords on the Sutlej was also reported. H. R. Gupta, *Punjab on the Eve of First Sikh War*, pp. 80, 198, 201, 206, 208, 219.

55 Fateh Khan Tiwana rebelled in the south; Gulab Singh Dogra refused to send in revenue and incited the frontier tribesmen to plunder Peshawar. Mulraj, governor of Multan, was sent against Fateh Khan. In an action

In July 1844, Lord Hardinge, a soldier of great repute replaced Lord Ellenborough as governor general. This appointment caused nervousness in Durbar circles.[56] Consequently, when in October the commander-in-chief of the East India Company's forces in India came up to inspect troops at Ludhiana and Ferozepur, the Punjab army was alerted against a possible invasion; frontier outposts on the river were quickly garrisoned and a twenty-four-hour watch kept on fords and ferries. The tension lasted several weeks.

The final crisis in Hira Singh Dogra's short career was precipitated by Jalla. The Brahmin priest, no puritan himself, cast scandalous aspersions on Rani Jindan's character.[57] The rani and her brother, Jawahar Singh, appealed to the army panćes, who acclaimed Jindan and her son, and swore to drive Hira Singh Dogra and Jalla out of the Punjab.

Hira Singh Dogra turned to his uncle for help. Gulab Singh hurried down from Jammu with 7000 Dogras. The news of the descent of the hillmen incensed the Khalsa soldiers, who decided to arrest the chief minister and his priest. Hira Singh and Jalla took an escort of Dogras and fled the capital.

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fought at Mitha Tiwana, about 900 men were killed on both sides. Fateh Khan lost his son and was compelled to submit. Gulab Singh's defiance subsided when Durbar troops were ordered to Jammu. He sent his son as hostage to Lahore.

56 When the news was read out in the court, Jalla remarked: 'Lord Auckland had invaded Afghanistan and his successor, Lord Ellenborough, had invaded Sindh and Gwalior, and now the new lord was no doubt willing to invade the Punjab.' *Punjab Intelligence*, 23 June 1844. The remark, was no doubt occasioned by the information sent a few days earlier that the governor general's council at Calcutta had, at its secret sitting, regretted the death of Attar Singh Sandhawalia because, if he had lived, the British would have acquired the Punjab without a fight, deserters from the Company's forces had augmented fears of invasion by stating that the British had planned to cross the Sutlej in September.

57 Rani Jindan, whose name was linked with many courtiers, was said to have become pregnant through a liaison with Lal Singh. She became very ill after an abortion, and it was said in open court that, if she died, Lal Singh would be executed. She survived the illness and, through her influence, Lal Singh was given the title of raja.

Khalsa troops caught up with the fleeing Dogra and his Brahmin mentor. A running fight ensued in which over 1000 Dogras were killed. Hira Singh and Jalla were slain and their heads were impaled on spears and paraded through the streets of Lahore.

Hira Singh Dogra had been a man of uncommon talent and courage. If circumstances had been different he might well have become the first Dogra-Sikh maharajah of the Punjab. But the upstart and arrogant Jalla led to his downfall. Jalla's memory is execrated in the doggerel:

Uper Allāh
Talley Jallā
Jalley de sir tey khallā

There is God above
And Jalla below,
And may He smack Jalla on the head with a shoe.

Maharani Jindan and Dalip Singh

For some time after the murders of Hira Singh Dogra and Jalla there was no one to conduct the affairs of the Durbar.[58] Gradually Maharani Jindan took the functions of the court in her hands. She was assisted by her brother Jawahar Singh (who assumed the title of vazir), Raja Lal Singh, and her maidservant, Mangla,[59]

58 'The rani with her son and her brother were alone in the fort. The rani sent for the bhai, Ram Singh, but he did not obey the summons. She sent then for the sardars of the council who had but recently left the Durbar but not one would go near her. They declare the kingdom is now in the hands of the troops and they must wait to see what they decree.' Broadfoot to Currie, 4 January 1845. SC 58 of 4.4.1845.

59 Mangla was the daughter of a water-carrier of Kangra who was employed by Jindan in 1835. After the death of Ranjit Singh she became the maharani's confidante and was rumoured to be the go-between her mistress and Lal Singh. She herself became the mistress of Jindan's brother, Jawahar Singh. At the time in question, she was 30 years of age. The relationships of Jindan with Lal Singh and of Mangla with Jawahar Singh were subjects of much scandal.

who, because the maharani was in purdah, acted as an intermediary for her mistress. Jindan's first task was to win over the army. In this she had to contend with Prince Peshaura Singh.[60] Jindan completely outbid Peshaura Singh and for some time was assured of military support for her son, Maharajah Dalip Singh.[61]

Gulab Singh Dogra utilized the dissension at Lahore to set himself up as an independent ruler in Jammu. He opened negotiations with the Barakzai Afghans and the British; he began to strengthen his forts and to inflame the hill people against the Sikhs. 'The mountaineers are united against the Seikhs; they regard the war as one of religion,' he is reported to have said.[62]

In February 1845 Durbar troops which had been posted along the Sutlej to meet a possible British invasion were directed to Jammu. Gulab Singh Dogra submitted. He handed over 4 lac rupees as tribute, feted the Khalsa army, and sent it back on the road to Lahore loaded with gifts. The Khalsa had not gone very far from Jammu when they were ambushed by the Dogras and relieved of all the tribute. They returned to Jammu and inflicted

60 Broadfoot in a letter to Currie dated 5 January 1845, reports that 'the camps of the troops were a scene of commotion, the men declaring that they would have no ruler but Peshora Singh, who would increase their pay and under whom they would conquer Jasrota and Jammu. They declared that the rani and her brother were unfit to govern, and that the sardars of the council and their officers did nothing but get jagirs themselves, while they (the private soldiers) were resolved to have no ruler who did not increase their pay.' SC 61 of 4.4.1845.

61 'Diwan Deena Nath stated that including 25 lacs of rupees remitted in the first days of joy and generosity the extra expenditure amounts in fifteen days to a crore of rupees, of which three quarters have gone to the regular army. This is an exaggeration so far as the troops are concerned, but it is no doubt true as to the treasury, for the *mootusudees* having now to deal only with the inexperienced rani and the ignorant soldiery call the expenditure what they please, and embezzle the difference between that and the real disbursements. The troops know, and speak of this, and one day purpose to recover these sums for themselves.' Broadfoot to Currie, 7 January 1845. SC 68 of 4.4.1845.

62 SC 68 of 4.4.1845.

several defeats on the Dogras. Gulab Singh again capitulated. He came to the Sikh camp, 'placed his sword and shield on the ground... and stood with his hands joined as a suppliant,'[63] and protested his loyalty. The credulous pañces were again brought round by gold and words of flattery.[64] A treaty of peace was drawn up by which Gulab Singh undertook to pay 35 lac rupees, of which five had to be paid immediately,[65] and to accompany the army to Lahore.

The Dogra displayed great presence of mind and a Machiavellian adroitness in extricating himself from a nasty situation. He showed calculated indifference to the summons to appear before the court, stating that he was the servant of the Khalsa army and not of the Durbar and that he would only answer to the pañces.[66] (He had announced earlier that the monthly wages of infantry men should be increased from 12 to 15 rupees per mensem.)[67] He joined the faction of Lal Singh and became his brother-in-arms by exchanging swords with him.[68] (A few weeks later he accused Lal Singh of attempting to assassinate him.)[69] He was placed under house arrest; but he bought his way out in a few days. He was fined 68 lac of rupees; but he got away with the payment of only 27 lacs.[70] He let it be known that the Chinese had invaded his northern provinces and gained permission to return to Jammu. As soon as he was back in his mountain

63 SC 147 of 4.4.1845.

64 'In the hills Raja Gulab Singh continues to make in public abject professions of submission to the Durbar and of being broken-hearted, and desirous only of dying in peace, but he is preparing with unwearied energy for war, and is stirring up every enemy to the Sikhs and every ally to himself that his messengers can reach. His intrigues also are incessant at the Durbar with Peshora Singh, with the army, and on this side of Sutlej, and day after day his agents offer and receive fresh terms of submission, which are duly discussed by the council.' Broadfoot to Currie, 16 January 1845. SC 102 of 4.4.1845.

65 SC 22 of 20.6.1845.

66 SC 58 of 20.6.1845.

67 SC 49 of 20.6.1845.

68 SC 53 of 20.6.1845.

69 SC 34 of 15.8.1845.

70 SC 58 of 20.6.1845.

fastness, he reopened negotiations with the British and offered them his services in the event of war against the Sikhs.[71]

While the Durbar troops were engaged in Jammu, Prince Peshaura Singh returned to the Punjab and set up a rival court at Sialkot. This was a signal for lawless elements to rise. Gangs of Nihangs roamed about the Majha country and threatened to loot Amritsar and Lahore.[72] Rani Jindan tried to win over the families of powerful chieftains to her son's side against the pretensions of Peshaura Singh and to help restore law and order in the state. She broke off Dalip Singh's engagement with the comparatively poor Nakkais and betrothed him to the daughter of Chattar Singh Attariwala. This did not deter Peshaura Singh. He captured the fort of Attock, proclaimed himself maharajah, and approached the Afghans for help. Chattar Singh Attariwala proceeded to Attock.

Peshaura Singh's attempts to secure help from the Afghans and rouse the populace in his favour were not successful. He accepted the assurance of personal safety from Chattar Singh Attariwala and agreed to accompany him to the capital. Twenty miles from Attock, the prince was seized, brought back to the fort, and murdered. The pañces discovered that the army had once again been used by one Durbar faction against another. They felt that the murder of Peshaura Singh had been master-minded by Rani Jindan's brother, Jawahar Singh, and ordered him to appear before the army pañcāyat.

On the evening of 21 September 1845, the terrified Jawahar Singh clutched the infant Dalip to his bosom and rode out on his elephant to answer the summons of the pañcāyat. Rani Jindan and her maidservant Mangla followed with their escort. At the cantonment, Jawahar Singh refused to alight from his elephant. The guards plucked the maharajah from his lap and speared

71 Gulab Singh's agent, Sheo Dutt, called on Broadfoot in August 1845 and had it conveyed that 'he would at once cause the whole of them (the hillmen) to revolt against the Sikhs and submit to the British or, if desired, he could besides assemble 40,000 troops from the hills, probably 50,000, but certainly 40,000 and more and attack the Sikhs.' SC 46 of 25.10.1845.

72 SC 147 of 4.4.1845.

Jawahar Singh where he sat in the howdah. Next morning the minister's corpse was cremated. His four wives, who committed satī, died cursing the Khalsa and prophesying that the wives of Sikh soldiers would soon be widows and the Punjab laid desolate. Jindan returned to the palace screaming vengeance against the army and threatening to immolate herself and her son.

The army pañcāyat took over the affairs of state and became the sovereign of the Punjab. It selected Dewan Dina Nath to act as its mouthpiece and issued instructions that no letter was to be issued to the English till the pañces had deliberated on its contents. The pañcāyat acted in the name of the Khalsa.[73] Its orders were issued under the seal *Akāl Sahāi*—the Lord is our helper.[74]

73 For a while the army pañces were able to introduce strict discipline among the men and to maintain order in the capital. It is curious that in this atmosphere of Sikh resurgence many of the leaders of the army council were Dogra-Hindus: Mian Prithi Singh, son of Mian Albel Singh; Mian Pacchattar Singh, son of Rai Kesri Singh; and Mian Naurang Singh, son of Mian Labh Singh. SC 119 of 20.12.1845. It would appear that the Sikh-Dogra conflict was largely an upper-class phenomenon.

74 The British were much exercised by what seemed to them to be a change in the form of government. It was noticed that the term *Sarbat Khālsā* had been introduced in the official correspondence of the Durbar since the death of Maharajah Sher Singh and as the army council gained power at the expense of the palace coterie, expressions like *Sarkār Khālsājī* and *Khālsā Pañth* came into vogue. The British agent was instructed to make it clear that his government would recognize no other form of government save a monarchy and regarded 'the army with its self-constituted pañcāyats in no other light than as the subjects and servants of the government.' SC 114 of 44.1845.

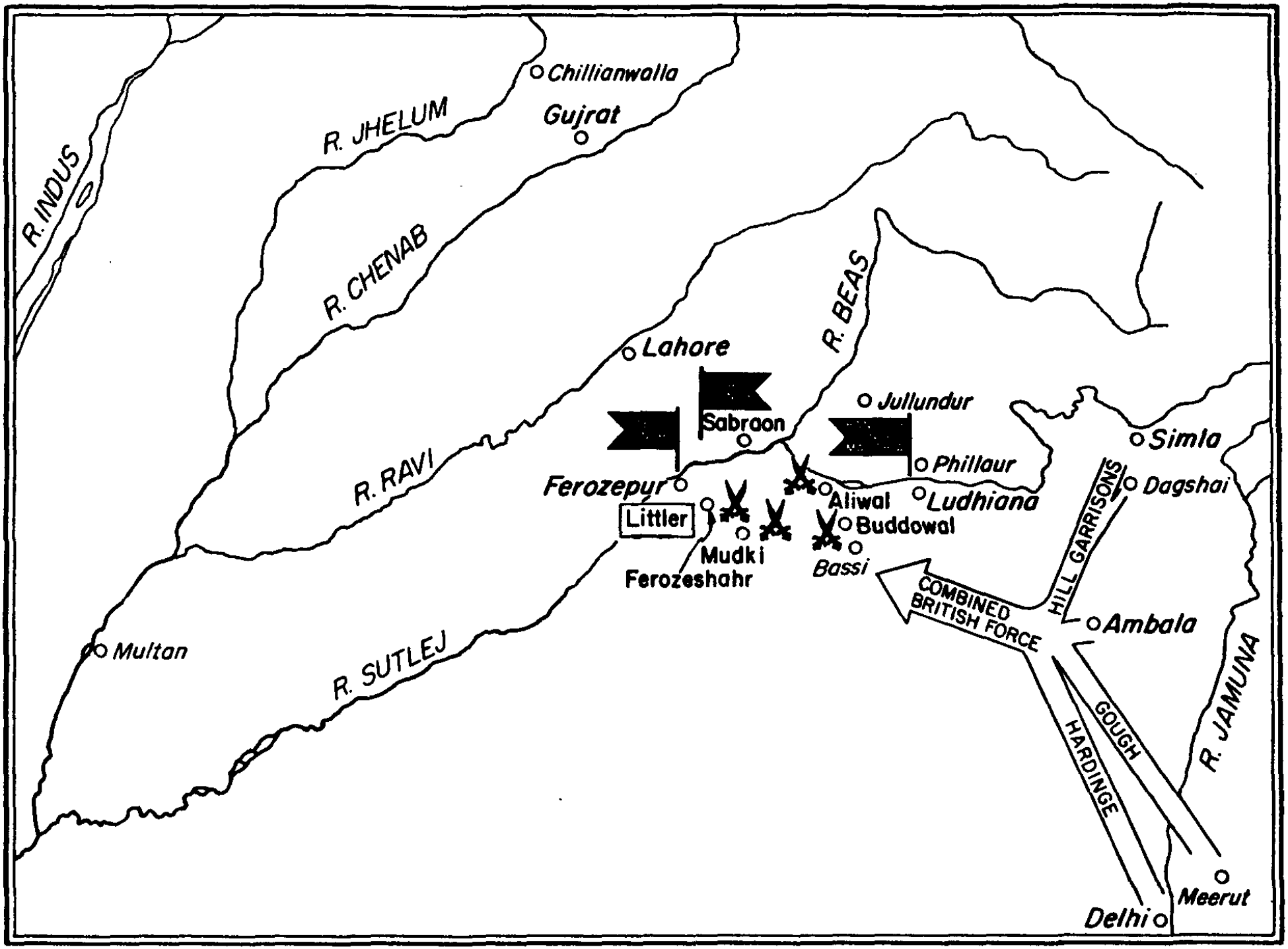
2. First Anglo-Sikh War

British Preparations

When did the British decide that the state of anarchy in the Punjab had come to such a pass that the security of their possessions required the strengthening of the Sutlej frontier and, if necessary, crossing the river? And when did the Sikhs come to the conclusion that the British had resolved to take the Punjab as they had taken the rest of India and were moving their troops with hostile intent?

It is not possible to answer these questions with any precision. There were Englishmen who believed that it was the destiny of their race to rule and civilize the natives; sections of the British press publicized these views and wrote of extending the *Pax Britannica* to the furthest geographical borders of the sub-continent—and even beyond. The Durbar was not ignorant of these views. Reports published in Calcutta newspapers, gists of speeches delivered by English officials, and talk in regimental messes were transmitted to Lahore. After the death of Ranjit Singh, the Punjab campaign had become a common topic of discussion in British circles. By the time Sher Singh became maharajah, these discussions had crystallized into plans of conquest. With the arrival in July 1844 of Lord Hardinge, an experienced soldier, the plans were translated into blueprints;[1]

1 Hardinge's policy vis-à-vis the Sikh kingdom underwent a radical change. At first he believed in maintaining a strong Sikh state as a buffer



FIRST ANGLO-SIKH WAR, 1845-1846

men and munitions were moved up to the Punjab frontier to be at their allotted places in time for the campaigning season, which began in the autumn.[2] In September 1844, Broadfoot, who had earned notoriety for his anti-Punjabi behaviour and was known to be 'rather too prone to war,' was chosen to replace Colonel Richmond as the agent at Ludhiana.

The army mustered along the Sutlej was, however, not strong enough to invade the Punjab, nor was there any semblance of an excuse to do so.[3] The invasion project was postponed, but not abandoned. The movement of troops towards the frontier was maintained.[4] A fleet of sixty flat-bottomed boats, designed to link

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between British India and the Muslim countries beyond the Indus. He pursued this policy till the murders of Hira Singh Dogra and Jalla in December 1844. Thereafter he was convinced that the Sikhs were incapable of maintaining a stable government, and he changed his own policy to one of deliberately weakening the Sikhs by strengthening the Dogras in the hills and fortifying the Sutlej frontier with a view to annexing the Punjab at an opportune moment. *'The government of the Punjab must be Sikh or British,'* he wrote to Lord Ripon on 8 January 1845—italicizing the words himself.

2 'On the northwest frontier, I am in correspondence with Gough to get all our troops of horse artillery and bullocks in complete order; and we propose to send our companies of Europeans, picked men, to fill up vacancies.' Hardinge to Ellenborough, 17 September 1844. *Foreign and Political Department Records.*

Lord Hardinge brought two sons with him to handle his secret correspondence.

3 In a letter dated 23 January 1845, Hardinge apprised Ellenborough of the situation. He wrote: 'Even if we had a case for devouring our ally in his adversity, we are not ready...moderation will do us no harm, if in the interval the hills and the plains weaken each other; but on what plea could we attack the Punjab if this were the month of October, and we had our army in readiness?' The letter continues: 'Self preservation may require the dispersion of this Sikh army, the baneful influence of such an example is the evil most to be dreaded, but exclusive of this case, how are we to justify the seizure of our friend's territory who in adversity assisted us to retrieve our affairs?' Ganda Singh, *Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars*, p. 72.

4 'We shall now begin to move up the additional regiments to Ferozepur, Ludhiana and Ambala, the barracks, etc. being nearly ready. As the fords deepen and the heat increases, these movements will cause no alarm but

up into a pontoon bridge and provide passage to 6000 infantry at one trip,[5] was assembled on the eastern banks of the Sutlej; by the summer of 1845 Broadfoot was exercising these boats without 'concealment or mystery'.[6]

By the autumn of 1845, the invasion force—the largest ever assembled by the British in India—was poised on the Punjab frontier. It had been increased from 17,000 men and 66 guns in the time of Ellenborough to over 40,000 men and 94 guns.[7] In addition to Ludhiana (which had been the only military outpost till 1809), cantonments had been built at Ambala, Ferozepur, and in the Simla hills overlooking the Sutlej. In the first week of December 1845, Lord Gough personally led units from Meerut and Ambala towards Ferozepur, where General Littler awaited

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quietly we will get the troops in their proper place.' Hardinge to Ellenborough, 8 March 1845. *Foreign and Political Department Records.*

5 Charles Hardinge, who was acting secretary to his father, informed the agent at Ludhiana of their dispatch. 'They are of equal dimensions, each carrying a gun, two grappling irons with strong chains, and 100 men, the 60 boats would therefore for a short distance, such as the passage of a river, carry 6000 infantry at one trip.'

The young subaltern offered advice to the seasoned intriguer. 'It is not desirable that the purposes to which these boats can be applied should unnecessarily transpire.' If questioned by the vakīl of the Lahore Durbar, Broadfoot was to state that they were to be used to meet the increase of mercantile traffic on the Indus. Broadfoot, *Career of Major George Broadfoot,* pp. 283–6.

6 Ibid., p. 331.

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Post	*Strength as Left by Lord Ellenborough*	*Strength at First Breaking Out of War*
Ferozepur	4596 men	10,472 men
	12 guns	24 guns
Ludhiana	3030 men	7235 men
	12 guns	22 guns
Ambala	4133 men	12,972 men
	24 guns	32 guns
Total force exclusive of hill stations, which remained the same.	17,612 men	40,523 men
	66 guns	94 guns

Reference: Charles Hardinge, *Viscount Hardinge,* p. 76.

him and where the boats had been assembled to bridge the Sutlej. Lord Hardinge decided to join Gough to give the benefit of his experience to his commander-in-chief.

Sikh Unpreparedness

'At Lahore they are quiet, drinking and intriguing politically and amorously,'[8] wrote Broadfoot in July 1845. A month later he reported in somewhat the same vein. 'I sometimes feel as if I were a sort of parish constable at the door of a brothel rather than the representative of one government to another.'[9] Even after making allowances for the British agent's gullibility in accepting bazaar gossip as authentic news, one cannot avoid the conclusion that while the British were carefully planning for war—aggressive or defensive—the Durbar lulled itself into a false sense of security and abandoned itself to the delights of the flesh. Rani Jindan, Raja Lal Singh, the chief minister, and Tej Singh, the commander-in-chief of the Sikh forces, and many of the chieftains, both Sikh and Dogra, were in communication with the British and willing to sell the Punjab provided their lives and jagirs were secured.[10] The courtiers were thoroughly scared of the undisciplined soldiery and sought its destruction. British troop movements gave them an opportunity to divert the attention of the army from their own conduct to the British and so whip up the Khalsa's anglophobia.[11]

8 SC 10 of 5.9.1845.

9 Broadfoot to Currie, 6 August 1845, SC 10 of 5.9.1845.

10 'You will be so good as to report whether you have any authentic knowledge of the numbers of these influential chiefs, the identity of their projects and whether the terms they expect have been matured by combinations and agreements amongst themselves, so as to constitute a powerful part representing a large portion of the Punjab property, in land as well as in feudations, and thus to have some approximation as to the importance of these chiefs supposed to represent the natural interests of that country.' Hardinge to Broadfoot, 10 September 1845. SC 48 of 25.10.1845.

11 'The Durbar has also been lately a little excited by the account of our preparations received from their newswriters at our various stations who send in an exaggerated shape every idle rumour of our newspapers or military cantonments.' Broadfoot to Currie, 14 July 1845. SC 34 of 15.8.1845.

The Khalsa army was hostile to both the Durbar and the British. The former it blackmailed into granting higher wages (the Punjabi trooper drew almost twice as much pay as the Company's sepoy); the latter was suspected of buying over the ministers and senior officers in order to facilitate plans of conquest. Although the army was the chief author of the chaos in the state, the pañces were able to maintain a certain measure of discipline in the cantonments[12] and to organize the casting of new guns, construction of carriages, laying in stores of gunpowder, muskets and swords, etc.[13] They were also able to infuse a sense of patriotism in the rank and file, resurrect the mystique of the invincibility of the Khalsa, and fire them with the ambition of driving the *feringhee* into the sea.[14]

The British agent asked for an explanation of the military preparations. The Durbar replied that they were defensive measures to counter the aggressive designs of the British. In addition, the Durbar asked for the return of the treasure of Suchet Singh Dogra estimated at over 17 lac of rupees, the restoration of village Moron[15] in Nabha, and free passage for the

12 'Yet as on former occasions there is a singular species of order in this anarchy; the troops and pañcayāts, except at the moment of a tumult use the words of subordinates though they substantially command, and they profess to desire to give the nominal supremacy to anyone of their own body in the same manner. Though their excesses in the hills were great, especially in respect of women, yet they maintain sufficient order in their camps, to have bazars with dealers in grain; whose convoys are respected, and though their officers are looked on rather as servants than commanders and dare not do anything contrary to the inclinations of the pañcayāts they are to a considerable extent obeyed in carrying out movements approved by the pañcayāts and chaudries.' Broadfoot to Currie, 27 March 1845. SC 33 of 20.6.1845.

13 SC 34 of 15.8.1845.

14 Col. Gardner describes the atmosphere in Lahore. He says that such was 'the real belief that the intentions of the British were aggressive, such the domestic incitements of their families to plunder, and such their devotion to their mystic faith, that one single, dogged determination filled the bosom of each soldier. The word went round, "we will go to the sacrifice."' *Memoirs of Alexander Gardner,* edited by Hugh Pearse, pp. 265–6.

15 In 1819, Moron had been given to Ranjit Singh by the raja of Nabha in exchange for land in the Punjab. Ranjit Singh had given the village to

Punjab armed constabulary to the Durbar's possessions across the Sutlej—a right that had been acknowledged by the British on paper but more often than not denied in practice.

The British government rejected the Durbar's explanation.

Lord Gough continued to advance. Lord Hardinge joined him on 26 November at Karnal, and the two proceeded to march towards Ferozepur. On 3 December the British severed diplomatic relations with the Durbar by handing the Durbar agent his passport. There was little doubt now that the British wanted war. If they were allowed to join their forces at Ferozepur, they would inevitably cross the pontoon bridge and menace Lahore. The Khalsa army decided to forestall this move. One division was ordered to engage General Littler and the other to intercept the army advancing under Gough and Hardinge.

On 11 December 1845, the Punjab army began to cross the Sutlej near Hari ki Pattan[16] to its own territory on the other side of the river. On 13 December Lord Hardinge declared war. He accused the Sikhs of invading British territories 'without a shadow of provocation'. The Durbar's possessions on the left bank of the Sutlej were confiscated and Cis-Sutlej chiefs were called upon to cooperate in punishing a 'common enemy'.[17]

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one of his sardars. The raja of Nabha forcibly occupied and looted Moron in 1843. Despite the protest of the Durbar, the British upheld the action of the Nabha raja.

16 There is some confusion regarding the actual date of crossing. The British allege that the Sikhs crossed between the 8th and 12th of December. Some Indian historians (Sita Ram Kohli and Dr Ganda Singh) put the date later—Dr Kohli, specifically to 14 or 15 December, that is, after Hardinge's proclamation of war. There is little doubt that Hardinge's proclamation was made after some Sikh units had crossed over. Probably the operation, performed by a handful of small boats and over one ford, took a few days to complete.

17 Despite the forthright language used in the proclamation of war, Lord Hardinge had his doubts about the morality of his action. Five days later he remarked to Robert Cust, personal assistant to Broadfoot: 'Will the people of England consider this as an actual invasion of our frontier and a justification of war?' It is not surprising that Cust referred to the advance of the British force as 'the first British invasion of the independent kingdom of the Punjab.' *Linguistic and Oriental Essays*, v, 46–7.

treasonable communication with the English, and in all probability Rani Jindan was aware that Lal Singh had written to the British 'to consider him and the *bībī sāhībā* (Jindan) as their friends and cut up the *būrchās* (ruffians, i.e., the Khalsa) for them.'[19]

Battle of Mudki, 18 December 1845

The Durbar army was divided into two: Tej Singh proceeded towards Ferozepur to reckon with General Littler. Lal Singh entrenched the larger part of his force near village Pheru Shahr (later known as Ferozeshahr) and himself marched on to intercept Gough and Hardinge. He was surprised to find that the British had advanced as far as Mudki. Despite the enemy's superiority in men and arms, Lal Singh ordered his troops to commence hostilities while he himself retired to Ferozeshahr. The leaderless Punjabis fought a grim hand-to-hand battle against the more numerous enemy led by the most experienced commanders of Europe. The battle continued with unabated fury till midnight (and came thereafter to be known as 'Midnight Mudki'). After the loss of half of their force and fifteen guns, the Punjabis withdrew from the battlefield.

The field action of Mudki was not of very great military significance except insofar as it gave the British their first experience of the fighting qualities of the Punjabi soldier. British casualties were heavy;[20] reinforcements were sent for from Ambala, Meerut, and Delhi. Lord Hardinge relinquished his superior position of governor general and agreed to become second-in-command to his commander-in-chief. The march to the Sutlej was resumed.

Battle of Ferozeshahr, 21 December 1845

On the morning of 21 December Gough came in sight of the Punjabi entrenchments at Ferozeshahr. By the afternoon, General Littler, who had eluded Tej Singh, was able to join forces with

19 Nicholson's Diary dated 12 December 1845.

20 872 dead and wounded including Quartermaster General Sir Robert Sale, Sir John McGaskill, and Brigadier Boulton.

Gough. The British commanders ordered an immediate attack. The battle commenced late in the afternoon on what happened to be the shortest day of the year. The British tried to overrun the Punjabis in one massive cavalry, infantry, and artillery onslaught. The battle raged with extreme ferocity through the evening till both armies were enveloped in the dark. A shell hit the Punjabi powder magazine and set many tents on fire. The Punjabis turned the misfortune to their advantage by falling on parties of the enemy who had penetrated their entrenchments. At midnight the moon rose over the battlefield giving the Punjabis another opportunity to liquidate enemy pockets and recover the ground they had lost. The British suffered terrible casualties; every single member of the governor general's staff was killed or wounded.[21] That frosty night 'the fate of India trembled in the balance'.[22]

The sun rose on the plains of Ferozeshahr over a terribly battered British army. It had run out of ammunition, and the men had no stomach left for battle. At this point Tej Singh arrived from Ferozepur with troops, fresh and eager for combat.[23]

21 Among the dead was the notorious Broadfoot.

22 Sir Hope Grant, one of the British generals who fought in the Anglo-Sikh wars, wrote: 'Truly that night was one of gloom and foreboding and never perhaps in our annals of India warfare has a British army on so large a scale been nearer to a defeat which would have involved annihilation. The Sikhs had practically recovered the whole of their entrenched camp; our exhausted and decimated divisions bivouacked without mutual cohesion over a wide area....' *Life of General Sir Hope Grant*, I, 58–9, edited by H. Knollys.

Lord Hardinge sent his son back to Mudki with a sword he had been given for his services in the Napoleonic campaigns and instructions that in the event of a defeat all his private papers were to be destroyed.

An entry in Robert Cust's diary shows that the British generals had decided to lay down their arms: 'December' 22nd. News came from the governor general that our attack of yesterday had failed, that affairs were desperate, that all state papers were to be destroyed, and that if the morning attack failed, all would be over; this was kept secret by Mr Currie and we were concerting measures to make an unconditional surrender to save the wounded, the part of the news that grieved me the most.' *Linguistic and Oriental Essays*, VI, 48.

23 See also Vol. II, p. 162, of *The Autobiography of Lt. General Sir Harry Smith*, ed. by G. C. Moor Smith.

Tej Singh's guns opened fire. The British artillery had no shot with which to reply. Then, without any reason, Tej Singh's guns also fell silent, and, a few minutes later, Tej Singh ordered his troops to retreat. Lord Gough quickly realized that the Sikh commanders had fulfilled their treacherous promise. He ordered his cavalry to charge the entrenchments at Ferozeshahr. The defenders, who were confidently expecting Tej Singh to give the enemy the coup de grace, were taken by surprise. They fled from their encampment, abandoning their guns, 80,000 lbs of gunpowder, and all their stores.[24]

The disaster at Ferozeshahr broke the morale of the few Durbar notables who had remained loyal to the state. Gulab Singh Dogra sent his agent to Ludhiana to negotiate terms for his assistance to the British;[25] his example was followed by many other chieftains.[26] To induce further desertions Hardinge issued a proclamation[27] inviting all natives of Hindustan to quit the service of the Durbar on pain of forfeiting their property and to claim protection from the British government.

Buddowal, 21 January 1846; Aliwal, 28 January 1846

Lord Gough decided to wait for reinforcements before crossing the Sutlej and pushing on to Lahore. The Durbar received information that enemy guns and munitions were being moved northwards from Delhi and Ambala. This armament was to be assembled at Ludhiana before being sent downstream to Ferozepur.

24 Soon after the defeat, Tej Singh visited the British camp and had an interview with Lord Hardinge. What passed between the two is not known; but from the subsequent treatment the British accorded to the traitor, it is not hard to guess.

25 SC 319 of 26.12.1846.

26 *Dispatch to Secret Committee No. 2* of 26.12.1846.

27 SC 246 of 26.12.1846. There were many Hindustani sepoys in the Durbar's forces: Jemadar Khushal Singh and his nephew Tej Singh, the commander-in-chief, were from Meerut.

Ranjodh Singh Majithia and Ajit Singh of Ladwa crossed the Sutlej at Phillaur with a force of 8000 men and 70 guns. In rapid marches they liberated the forts of Fatehgarh, Dharamkote, Gangarana, and Buddowal and encamped at Baran Hara, seven miles from Ludhiana. The Punjabis stole into Ludhiana cantonment and set many barracks on fire.

Sir Harry Smith was sent to relieve Ludhiana. He marched northwards from Ferozepur, keeping a few miles away from the Sutlej. Ranjodh Singh Majithia harried Smith's column and, when Smith tried to make a detour at Buddowal, attacked his rear with great vigour and captured his baggage train and stores.[28]

A few days later, Sir Harry Smith received the reinforcements he was expecting and turned on the Punjabis. At Aliwal, Smith inflicted a sharp defeat on Ranjodh Singh Majithia and Ajit Singh of Ladwa (both of whom fled the battlefield). Once more the Punjabi men refused to give in.[29] Large numbers were killed fighting; many were drowned in the river. Fifty-six guns were lost to the enemy.

Sabraon, 10 February 1846

The loss of armour at Aliwal put the Durbar army on the defensive. Its generals were uncertain where the enemy would cross the Sutlej and so they split their forces. To check the

28 Sir Harry Smith paid tribute to Ranjodh Singh Majithia's tactics at Buddowal. 'It is the most scientific move made during the war,' he wrote in his autobiography, 'and had he known how to profit by the position he had so judiciously occupied he would have obtained wonderful success. He should have attacked me with the vigour his French tutors would have displayed and destroyed me, for his force compared to mine was overwhelming; then turned about upon the troops at Ludhiana, beaten them and sacked and burnt the city....' *The Autobiography of Lt. General Sir Harry Smith* (Vol. II, 186–7.)

29 'Although their leader Ranjodh Singh was the first to fly and basely quit the field leaving his brave followers to conquer or lose, their courage never quailed,' wrote Humbley. 'Again they rallied and made one last and vigorous effort. Though defeat had made them desperate they fought like men who jeopardised all.' Humbley, *Journal of a Cavalry Officer*, p. 150.

enemy advance on Lahore, the larger portion of the army was entrenched in a horseshoe curve of the Sutlej near village Sabraon; this was under the command of the traitor, Tej Singh. The other traitor, Lal Singh, posted himself a little higher up the river ostensibly to prevent an attack on Amritsar.

Punjabi entrenchments at Sabraon were on the left bank of the Sutlej with a pontoon bridge connecting them with their base camp. Their big guns were placed behind high embankments and consequently immobilized for offensive action. The infantry was also posted behind earthworks and could not, therefore, be deployed to harass the enemy.

Gough and Hardinge decided to make a frontal assault on Sabraon and destroy the Durbar army at one blow. This was undoubtedly planned with confidence that the Sikh commanders were on their side.[30]

On 7 February it began to rain. For the next two days the downpour continued unabated, and the Sutlej rose more than seven inches, making all fords quite unfordable; only one rickety pontoon bridge connected the army encamped on the left bank with its base. Gough was quick to seize the opportunity. As soon as the rain stopped, he marched out of Ferozepur and, under cover of darkness, took his position at Sabraon.

On the morning of 10 February a heavy mist spread from the river over the rain-sodden fields, enveloping both contending armies. When the sun broke through the mist, the Punjabis found themselves encircled between two horseshoes: facing them were the Briton and behind them was the Sutlej now in spate. After a preliminary artillery duel, British cavalry made a feint to check on the exact location of Punjabi guns. The cannonade was resumed, and in two hours British guns put the Durbar artillery out of action. Then the British charged Punjabi entrenchments from three sides.

30 Through intermediaries, Henry Lawrence was able to glean sufficient information from Lal Singh to enable him to prepare a 'rough sketch of the position and strength of the enemy at Sabraon on the night of 7th February' for transmission to the commander-in-chief Henry Lawrence to the secretary, 16 May 1846. *Henry Lawrence's Private Papers.*

Tej Singh fled across the pontoon bridge and had it destroyed. But most of the other generals stayed to fight. The most famous of them was Sham Singh Attariwala,[31] who tallied the Punjabis in a last desperate stand against the enemy. Those who tried to escape were drowned in the swirling waters of the Sutlej. Nearly 10,000 Punjabis lost their lives in the action. All their guns were either captured or abandoned in the river. It was a complete and crushing defeat.[32]

Lord Gough described Sabraon as the Waterloo of India. He paid tribute to the Punjabis: 'Policy precluded me publicly recording my sentiments on the splendid gallantry of our fallen foe, or to record the acts of heroism displayed, not only individually, but almost collectively, by the Sikh sardars and the army; and I declare were it not from a deep conviction that my country's good required the sacrifice, I could have wept to have witnessed the fearful slaughter of so devoted a body of men.'[33]

31 Sham Singh Attariwala was the son of Nihal Singh, one of Ranjit Singh's celebrated generals. Sham Singh Attariwala catered service under the maharajah in 1803 and fought in the Multan, Kashmir, and north-west frontier campaigns. His daughter married Ranjit Singh's grandson, Nao Nihal Singh.

Sham Singh Attariwala won immortal fame for reckless bravery at Sabraon. The Punjabi bard, Shah Mohammad, wrote of him as 'squeezing blood out of the whites as one squeezes juice out of a lemon.'

32 'It is due to the Sikhs to say that they fought bravely,' wrote General Sir Joseph Thackwell, who was present at the battle; 'for though defeated and broken, they never ran, but fought with their talwars to the last and I witnessed several acts of great bravery in some of their sirdars and men.' *Military Memoirs of Lieut.-General Sir Joseph Thackwell,* edited by Col. Wylly, p. 209.

Lord Hardinge, who saw the action, wrote: 'Few escaped; none, it may be said, surrendered. The Sikhs met their fate with the resignation which distinguishes their race.' *Viscount Hardinge,* p. 119.

33 Rait, *The Life and Campaigns of Viscount Gough,* p. 108.

The traitors Lal Singh and Tej Singh were 'immortalized' in doggerel verse punning on their names:

Lālū dī lālī gaī, Tejū dā geā tej
Ran vic pitḥ dikhāi ke moḍhā āie pher

The attitude of the people of Malwa during the conflict between their trans-Sutlej brethren and the British deserves attention. Of the innumerable Sikh chiefs of this region, only four—Patiala, Jind, Faridkot, and Chachrauli—gave unstinted support to the enemy; others either stayed on the fence or expressed sympathy with the Durbar.[34] Of the two Muslim chiefs, Malerkotla sided with the British; Mamdot, despite the offer of confirmation of his estates, allowed his brother to lead his contingent against the British at Ferozeshahr.[35] The attitude of the common people was uniformly hostile to the feringhee. Peasants refused to sell grain or fodder to the British army.

On the termination of the Sutlej campaign, the British government confiscated Rupar, Ladwa, and Allowala, took a quarter of Nabha territory and distributed it among the collaborating chiefs. The Malwa *jāgīrdārs* were deprived of judicial powers and left only with the right to collect revenue.

Laloo lost the blush of shame,
Tejoo lost his lustre,
By turning their backs in the field
They turned the tide and the battle yield.

34 These included Nabha, Ladwa, Allowala, Malaudh, Thanesar, Rupar, Kheri, Mani Majra, Shahabad, Sikri, Shamgarh, Buria, and the Sodhis of Anandpur.

35 SC 1300 of 26.12.1846.

3. The Punjab Under British Occupation

Two days after their victory at Sabraon, British forces crossed the Sutlej and occupied Kasur. The Durbar empowered Gulab Singh Dogra,[1] who had earlier come down to Lahore with

1 Gulab Singh was acceptable to the British because of his earlier negotiations with them and because he had prevented the Dogras from joining the Punjabis.

From January 1846 Gulab Singh had been in communication with the governor general through various agents. One of his emissaries was a Bengali physician, Bansi Dhar Ghosh, who delivered a letter from his master to Lieutenant E. Lake (assistant agent to the governor general) on 15 January 1846. The Dogra wanted to be early in his offer of collaboration. He wrote: 'He who wishes to climb the summit of a lofty mountain, must start at daybreak; should he delay, night may close over him ere he has gained the desire of his heart; the treasure which is buried in the depths of the mountain will become the prize of that man, who is the first to reach its summit.' SC 319 of 26.12.1846.

Early in February 1846, Gulab Singh sent a private emissary to Major Henry Lawrence, who had taken over the governor general's agency from Broadfoot. It seems clear that an understanding was reached between the British and Gulab Singh before the battle of Sabraon. As stated in his letter of 19 February 1846, to the Secret Committee, Hardinge gave Gulab Singh an assurance that his interests would be given full consideration. According to the editors of the 1955 edition of Cunningham's *History of the Sikhs* (p. 279), it was chiefly the disclosure of the communication between Hardinge and Gulab Singh which led to Cunningham's reversion from the political service to the army.

regiments of hillmen, to negotiate a treaty of peace. Gulab Singh Dogra first obtained assurances from the army pañces that they would agree to the terms he made and then tendered the submission of the Durbar to Lord Hardinge. Hardinge had already made up his mind about the future of the Sikh kingdom. He knew that there were still too many Khalsa soldiers scattered about in the country to permit annexation; so he contented himself with terms which would facilitate a takeover at a more appropriate time: he weakened the state by depriving it of valuable territory, by reducing its army, and by boosting a rival power on its frontier. These terms were incorporated in the treaty imposed on the Durbar.

Treaties of Lahore, 9 and 11 March 1846[2]

By the terms imposed by the victorious British, the Durbar was compelled to give up the Jullundur Doab,[3] pay a war indemnity of 1½ crores of rupees, reduce its army to 20,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry, hand over all the guns used in the Sutlej campaign, and relinquish control of both banks of the Sutlej to the British. A further condition was later added: the posting of a British unit in Lahore till the end of the year on payment of expenses. Although Rani Jindan continued to act as regent and Raja Lal Singh as vazir, effective power was vested in the British resident, Colonel Henry Lawrence.[4]

2 See Appendices 2 and 3.

3 Jullundur Doab was annexed because the Beas was considered a better military frontier than the Sutlej, and it was felt desirable to weaken the state which had produced 'a more perfect system of military organization than any which the British army had hitherto faced.' The Jullundur Doab was also very fertile, yielding more than 30 lac rupees per annum after defraying all expenses of administration. It could easily pay the expenses of the occupation force.

4 'In all our measures taken during the minority, we must bear in mind that by the Treaty of Lahore, March 1846, the Punjab never was intended to be an independent state. By the clause I added, the chief of the state can neither make war nor peace nor exchange nor sell an acre of territory, nor admit an European Officer, nor refuse us thoroughfare through his

The Durbar was unable to pay the full war indemnity and instead ceded the hill territories between the Beas and the Indus, including Kashmir and Hazara. Hardinge was reluctant to occupy the whole of this area.[5] In pursuance of the policy to weaken the Punjabis by strengthening the Dogras, he drew the line at the Chakkee river and retained only Kulu, Mandi, Nurpur, and Kangra (which were beyond the Beas); the rest was sold, to Gulab Singh Dogra for 75 lac rupees.[6] On 16 March 1846, another treaty was signed at Amritsar recognizing Gulab Singh Dogra as maharajah of Jammu and Kashmir. The Dogra got considerably more than he had expected as a reward for his

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territories, nor in fact, perform any act (except its own internal administration) without our permission. In fact, the native prince is in fetters, and under our protection, and must, do our bidding.' Hardinge to Henry Lawrence, 14 August 1847; Edwardes and Merivale, *Life of Henry Lawrence*, p. 417.

5 'It would bring us into collision with many powerful chiefs for whose coercion a large military establishment, at a great distance from our provinces and military resources, would be necessary...conflicting interests would be created and races of people with whom we have hitherto had no intercourse would be brought under our rule while the territories, excepting Kashmir, are comparatively unproductive and would scarcely pay the expenses of occupation and management.' *Governor General's Dispatch to Secret Committee No. 7* of 4 March 1846.

6 'On the other hand the tract now ceded includes the whole of the hill possessions of Raja Gulab Singh and the Jammu family; and while the severance of this frontier line from the Lahore possessions materially weakens that state and deprives it, in the eyes of other Asiatic powers, of much of its pride of position, its possession by us enables us at once to mark our sense of Raja Gulab Singh's conduct during the late operations, by regarding him in the mode most in accordance with his ambitious desires, to shew forth as an example to the other chiefs of Asia the benefits which accrue from an adherence to British interests, to create a strong and friendly power in a position to threaten and attack, should it be necessary to do so, the Lahore territories in their most vulnerable point and at the same time to secure to ourselves that indemnification for the expenses of the campaign, which we declared our determination to exact, and which excepting by the cession of territory, the Lahore Government is not in a condition to afford.' Ibid., of 4 March 1846.

services.[7] He accepted the gift, describing himself with more truth than he intended as *zar kharīd*—slave bought by gold.

The erstwhile kingdom of the Punjab[8] was divided between a triumvirate of Lawrence brothers and Gulab Singh Dogra. Henry as resident administered the Majha from Lahore; John as commissioner ruled the Jullundur Doab; George at Peshawar controlled Hazara[9] and the Derajat. British officers were posted at strategic points on the pretext of redrawing the state boundaries and helping Durbar officials in their duties. The young maharajah and his Durbar were merely the decorative facade of a kingdom that had ceased to exist except in name.[10]

7 'It was necessary last March to weaken the Sikhs by depriving them of Kashmir. The distance between Kashmir and the Sutlej is 300 miles of very difficult mountainous country, quite impracticable for six months. To keep a British force 300 miles from any possibility of support would have been an undertaking that merited a straitwaistcoat and not a peerage.' *Viscount Hardinge*, p. 133.

8 The revenues of what remained of the state were computed at 1 crore and 60 lacs of rupees (£1,600,000). After deducting expenses there was a net revenue of 108 lacs of rupees (£1,080,000):

Districts	*Net Revenue*	*Gross Revenue*
Peshawar	264,965	1,339,047
Multan	3,000,000	4,743,755
Punjab	7,554,195	10,022.420
[i.e., except the above districts and the Jullundur Doab]	10,819,160	16,105,222

SC 1325 of 26.12.1846.

9 Gulab Singh was unwilling (and unable) to take Hazara. He was compensated with territory adjoining Jammu. A public proclamation (No. 6 dated 25 May 1847) was made by the Durbar regarding the exchange of 'the country of Hazara situated to the west of the river Jhelum for an equivalent east of the river towards Jammu.' SC 134 of 26.6.1847.

10 In April 1846 an incident took place which has come to be known in history as the 'cow row'. It indicates the state of mind of the 'protectors' and their attitude towards the natives.

An English sentry, irritated by an obstruction caused by a herd of cows, slashed some of them with his sword, and thus outraged the religious susceptibilities of the Hindu and Sikh citizens. The resident and officers who went into the city to explain the misconduct of the sentry were pelted with stones. They demanded the severest punishment for the insult. The

The British experienced some difficulty in enforcing the treaties they had made with the Durbar and Gulab Singh Dogra. Henry Lawrence had to lead a force to Kangra to compel the surrender of the fort. The situation in Kashmir was even more tricky. Shaikh Imamuddin, the governor, received orders from the Durbar to hand over the administration to Gulab Singh Dogra. At the same time he received a secret note from Raja Lal Singh (who had been chagrined by the British government's generosity to Gulab Singh) advising him to resist Dogra intrusion.[11] The Shaikh, who had hoped to be confirmed in his post, expelled the Dogras sent against him. Once again Henry Lawrence had to compel obedience. Shaikh Imamuddin did not offer any resistance to the resident, and along with the reins of office he handed over the secret missives he had received from Raja Lal Singh. Raja Lal Singh was tried by a British court, found guilty of duplicity and exiled from the Punjab.[12] Tej Singh replaced him as the chief notable of the Durbar.

In December 1846, Lord Hardinge came to the Punjab. In the manner of empire-builders, he made the sardars gifts of watches (few of them could read the time) and arranged for the Durbar to submit a written request[13] that the British force con-

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next day Maharajah Dalip Singh was taken by Lal Singh to make his apologies to the resident. Many houses in the bazaar where the incident had taken place were razed to the ground and of the three men chiefly concerned in the stoning one was hanged and two deported. The English soldier who had caused the riot was 'warned to be more careful in the future.'

11 SC 1224 of 26.12.1846. See also Sethi, *Trial of Raja Lal Singh.*

12 Ibid., Lal Singh lived in Dehra Dun and Mussoorie till his death in 1867.

13 The Durbar was somewhat reluctant to submit a written request. In a letter dated 10 December 1846, Hardinge wrote to Currie: 'The coyness of the Durbar and the sirdars is natural; but it is very important that the proposal should originate with them; and in any documents proceeding from them this admission must be stated in clear and unqualified terms; our reluctance to undertake a heavy responsibility must be set forth.' In another letter, Lord Hardinge instructed Currie to 'persevere in your line of making the Sikh Durbar propose the condition or rather their readiness

tinue to be stationed in the Punjab till 1854, when Dalip Singh would come of age.

Treaty of Bhairowal, 16 December 1846

The Treaties of Lahore of March 1846 were replaced by a new one which was ratified at Bhairowal. By the terms of this treaty the British government undertook the maintenance of the administration and the protection of the maharajah during his minority. The resident was given full authority over all matters, in every department of the state. The governor general was empowered to occupy with British soldiers such positions as he thought necessary for the security of the capital, for the protection of the maharajah, and for the preservation of the peace of the country.[14] In short the British resident was made independent of the council of regency and elevated to the position of a governor.[15] Rani Jindan was deprived of all power and pensioned off with 1½ lac rupees per annum.

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to assent to any conditions imposed as the price of the continuance of our support.' In the preamble of the supplementary articles, the governor general added, 'this solicitation must clearly be their act.' Hardinge to Currie, 12 December 1846. *Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars,* p. [107] pp. 12–13. At an earlier meeting between Rani Jindan, Dalip Singh, Lal Singh, Bhai Ram Singh, Faqir Nuruddin, and John Lawrence on the evening of 10 September 1846, Rani Jindan had stated that after consultation with members of the Durbar on the 'resolve of the governor general to withdraw the army,' the conclusion to which they had unanimously arrived was that the 'existence of the government, indeed of her own life and that of the maharajah, solely depended on its presence and that of the British representative in Lahore.' She further said that 'if the army only stayed the Durbar would agree to any terms which the English government should think proper to impose.' Bhai Ram Singh followed up these representations by paying John Lawrence a visit the next morning. SC 1043 of 26.12.1846.

14 See Appendix 4.

15 Article 3 of the treaty gave the resident 'full authority to direct and control all matters in every department of state.'

Hardinge wrote to the Secret Committee: 'Your committee will perceive that, by these arrangements, I take under my direct control the executive

Administrative changes introduced by the conquerors both in the annexed territories and in those they administered in the name of the Durbar are worthy of attention. In the Jullundur Doab, consisting of the districts of Jullundur, Hoshiarpur, and Kangra, John Lawrence introduced land reforms which had far-reaching economic and political consequences. He found a baffling variety of land holdings ranging from those of the hill chiefs with troops of armed retainers which they were under obligation to furnish to the Durbar when required; estates of descendants of the Majha *misldārs* and of the Bedi and Sodhi descendants of the gurus; religious endowments; grants by *sanads*, and grants to officials in rewards for services to the state, etc.

John Lawrence confirmed the hill chiefs in their estates, but both in their cases and in those of jagirdars he commuted the obligation to furnish troops into cash payment. He also ordered the demolition of most of the forts in the region. As regards the other jagirs, he laid down the rule that all grants made after the death of Maharajah Sher Singh or made by unauthorized persons such as *nazīms* and *kārdārs* were to be resumed. The

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administration of these districts and am desirous before I leave this part of the country to introduce into these territories an effective system of administration, founded upon just principles and regulated by salutary rules of practice. Hitherto there has been nothing of the kind, and the character of British administration, for justice and consistency in these tracts which have been hitherto under our control, has not been maintained so fully as might have been desired.' *Governor General's Dispatch to Secret Committee No. 1* of 1847.

This was approved by the board of directors. The wording of their statement is significant: 'We have already conveyed to you our strong approbation of your project for establishing a British regency in the Punjab, in case you should determine not to evacuate the country. No middle course would be either prudent or safe; and our dominion, so long as it lasts, should be absolute and complete.' SC 1350 of 25.1.1847.

Hardinge was more candid to Hobhouse. Referring to the treaty, he wrote: 'It is in reality annexation brought about by the suppression of the Sikhs, without entailing upon us the present expense and future inconvenience of a doubtful acquisition.' *Broughton Papers* (Add. Mss 36,475 fascicule 220) British Museum.

most important jagirs were those granted by the Durbar to its loyal servants. John Lawrence was strongly of the opinion that this class of jagirdars was now idle, useless, disloyal, and 'always drones except when opportunity allows them to be wasps to sting us.'[16]

John Lawrence's measures, though largely beneficial to the peasant proprietors, adversely affected the land-owning class. They also caused uneasiness in Lahore circles as Trans-Sutlej chiefs owned large estates in the Jullundur Doab. The chiefs realized that if the British took the rest of the Punjab, they would be deprived of whatever jagirs remained to them.

As important as the disposal of the jagirs was the fixing of land revenue. John Lawrence made a summary settlement for three years which, though lighter than the Durbar's assessment, caused hardship because payment was demanded in cash instead of in agricultural produce. He also made revenue settlements directly with representatives of village communities, thus bypassing chaudharis and *lambardars*, who were in consequence deprived of the privilege of rent-free lands. The revenue officials became as disgruntled as the jagirdars.[17]

16 Note by John Lawrence dated 16 December 1846, para 8.

17 'If the introduction of our rule has been popular to the majority of cultivators, and generally the lower classes of society, it has been decidedly contrary to the (interests of) higher. The jagirdars have seen their power, influence and property entirely destroyed; the chaudharis and headmen of talooquas and villages have in the same way been reduced to the level of their poor brethren and being restrained on the one hand from enriching themselves by appropriating an undue portion of the village profits, they have also at the same time been shorn by government of the highly prized possession of cash, *inams*, rent free lands or favourable assessments.' R. N. Cust, deputy commissioner, Hoshiarpur, to commissioner and superintendent, Trans-Sutlej, 8 July 1847. *Board's Collections 117172*, pp. 160–1, India Office Library.

'The jagirdars are unfavourably disposed towards us, for their jagirs have been resumed. The chaudharis of villages are already losing their influence. Their *inam* or money allowances are reduced, and their claims to hold rent free lands are summarily dismissed.' H. Vansittart, deputy commissioner, Jullundur, to commissioner and superintendent, Trans-Sutlej, 7 September 1847. IPC 31.12.1847, Part 8, No. 2289, India Office Library.

In the Punjab that remained nominally under the Durbar, the resident proposed similar changes. Henry Lawrence tried to carry the Durbar with him; his brother John, who acted for him for a while, did not bother to do that. The Durbar's dominions were divided into four judicial districts, each under a judge.[18] Each judge was given a deputy and provided with troops to enforce his orders. The judges were to hear appeals from the decisions of kārdārs and were empowered to decide civil and criminal cases (but not revenue matters nor appoint kārdārs). British officers superintended the functioning of these courts. John Lawrence had the code of criminal law operative in British India printed at Lahore[19] (a lithograph press had been set up in the capital in January 1848) and circulated to judicial officers. The summary land settlement that John had introduced in the Jullundur Doab was later introduced in the Durbar's territories.

It did not take Rani Jindan and the Durbar chiefs long to realize that they had dissipated Ranjit Singh's kingdom: two-thirds of it had been divided between the invader and the upstart Dogra; and, in the third that remained, the writ that ran was that of the feringhee. They had looked to the British to protect their persons and properties from the rapacity of the Khalsa army. The British had saved them from the army but had exacted a

18 General Kahan Singh Man was appointed for Lahore; Ram Singh Jallawala for the Chaj Doab; Chattar Singh Attariwala for the country between the Jhelum and the Indus; Lehna Singh Majithia for the Majha including lands south-east of the Ravi up to the hills and down to Kasur.

19 Punjab Government Records, *Lahore Political Diaries 1847–1848,* III, 444.

Death by hanging was introduced into the kingdom for the first time. (In Ranjit Singh's days even murder was punishable by fine payable to relations of the deceased or by mutilation.)

Many progressive measures were introduced by the Durbar under British influence. The Durbar was persuaded to issue a proclamation against practices such as satī, infanticide, slavery, and forced labour (*begār*). The proclamation was not, however, enforced, and the practices continued till after the annexation of the country.

heavy price for doing so. In the new dispensation, the Durbar was shorn of all power, and the economic supremacy of landed aristocracy was seriously jeopardized. Rani Jindan was most perturbed with the way things were going and began to meddle in affairs of state.[20] The resident was dismayed to find that such was the magic of the name of Ranjit Singh that the people overlooked the past misdeeds of his widow and acclaimed her as their queen mother. It became necessary for the resident to remove her from the scene.[21] An excuse was provided when, at a formal ceremony to honour nobles, Dalip Singh refused to put the saffron mark on the forehead of Raja Tej Singh.[22] The resident saw the hand of Jindan behind the episode and two days later ordered her removal to Sheikhupura. She was, according to her complaint, 'dragged out by the hair'[23] to be taken to the fort; her allowance was reduced to less than a third. The outraged queen protested: 'Surely, royalty was never treated the way you are treating us! Instead of being secretly king of the country, why don't you declare yourself so? You talk about friendship and then put us in prison. You establish traitors in

20 Jindan strongly opposed the Treaty of Bhairowal and tried to persuade the sardars that they could govern the country without British assistance. 'Passion and not patriotism was the secret of this opposition,' was the opinion of Henry Lawrence. The resident forbade the sardars (notably Sher Singh Attariwala) to visit Jindan's private apartments. SC 166 of 30.1.1847.

21 In February 1847, a conspiracy to murder the resident and Raja Tej Singh was unearthed. It was also discovered that Prema, the instigator of the plot, was on visiting terms with a servant of Jindan. This was not considered enough to implicate the maharani. The governor general, however, encouraged the resident to try other means of getting rid of her. *Governor General's Dispatch to Secret Committee* of 5 September 1847; Hardinge to Currie, 10 June 1847.

Prema and three others were sentenced to imprisonment for life and five others to various terms in gaol. Punjab Government Records, *Lahore Political Diaries 1847–1848*, III, 284.

22 This was on 7 August 1847. The resident reported to the governor general: 'His Highness shrunk back into his velvet chair, with a determination foreign both to his age and gentle disposition.'

23 Jindan to John Lawrence, 10 September 1847. SC 119 of 30.10.1847.

Lahore, and then at their bidding you are going to kill the whole of the Punjab.'[24]

A strict guard was placed on Jindan. But the more restrictions and dishonour the British heaped on Jindan, the more she became a heroine in the eyes of the people. Most chieftains openly expressed their sympathy for her. Bhai Maharaj Singh, who had succeeded Bhai Bir Singh at Naurangabad and was held in as great esteem as his predecessor by the peasantry and nobility, acclaimed her.[25] The bhai was arrested by order of the resident but escaped from custody. He eluded the police and addressed large meetings in central Punjab, exhorting the people to rise and expel the feringhee.

Resentment against the English began to mount. The abolition of jagirs in the Jullundur Doab, radical changes introduced in the system of land revenue and its collection angered the landed classes and revenue officials. The insolence of the individual Englishmen did not endear them to the people. They outraged the religious sentiments of the non-Muslim populace by allowing the slaughter of kine;[26] they did not understand Sikh resentment against persons entering gurdwaras with shoes on.[27] Vile abuse, maltreatment of natives, and molesting of

24 'You say that I shall receive a monthly sum of 4000 rupees, and from this I suppose that you have reduced my allowance. I am the owner of a country yielding 3 crores of rupees, in revenue.... By what reckoning do you make out my allowances, to be 4000 per month? I will take what was fixed in the treaty, and if any alteration is made, it should be by way of increase and not of decrease.... You have not only destroyed my character, but have also imprisoned me, and separated me from my child. Give me bread, why take away my life by starvation. I am the owner of a kingdom; I will have redress from your queen. You have acted towards me unjustly.' SC 119 of 30.10.1847.

25 SC 142 of 31.7.1847. Maharaj Singh belonged to village Rabbon (district Ludhiana) and was present at the death of Bir Singh.

26 Punjab Government Records, *Lahore Political Diaries 1846–1849,* IV, 431, refers to sale of beef in the open market.

27 After the Treaty of Lahore. 1846, a tablet bearing the following inscription was placed near the entrance of the Harimandir:

'The priests of Amritsar having complained of annoyance, this is to make known to all concerned that by order of the governor general, British

women by English soldiers became common occurrences. The Punjabis began to listen credulously to the wildest of stories: that for two months European soldiers would be given liberty to accost any woman they chose; that all the Durbar's ministers would be gaoled;[28] that the sahibs were extracting *mumiāī* (human oil) from the corpses of natives.[29] Among the most eager listeners to this kind of gossip were the soldiers disbanded after the Sutlej campaign; over 20,000 had been let loose in the country without any occupation.[30]

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subjects are forbidden to enter the temple (called the Darbar) or its precincts, at Amritsar, or indeed any temple, with their shoes on.

'Kine are not to be killed at Amritsar, nor are the Sikhs to be molested or in any way to be interfered with.

'Shoes are to be taken off at the *bhoonga* at the corner of the tank and no person is to walk round the tank with his shoes on.

Lahore, 24th March 1847. Sd: Henry Lawrence, Resident'

28 Punjab Government Records, *Lahore Political Diaries 1847–1848,* III, 232.

29 Ibid., 413. The legend of the *mumiāīvālā*, operating on behalf of the British continued right up to 1947. The word is probably derived from Mumai Khan, a Mongol chief, who tortured his victims by hanging them by their feet over a slow fire.

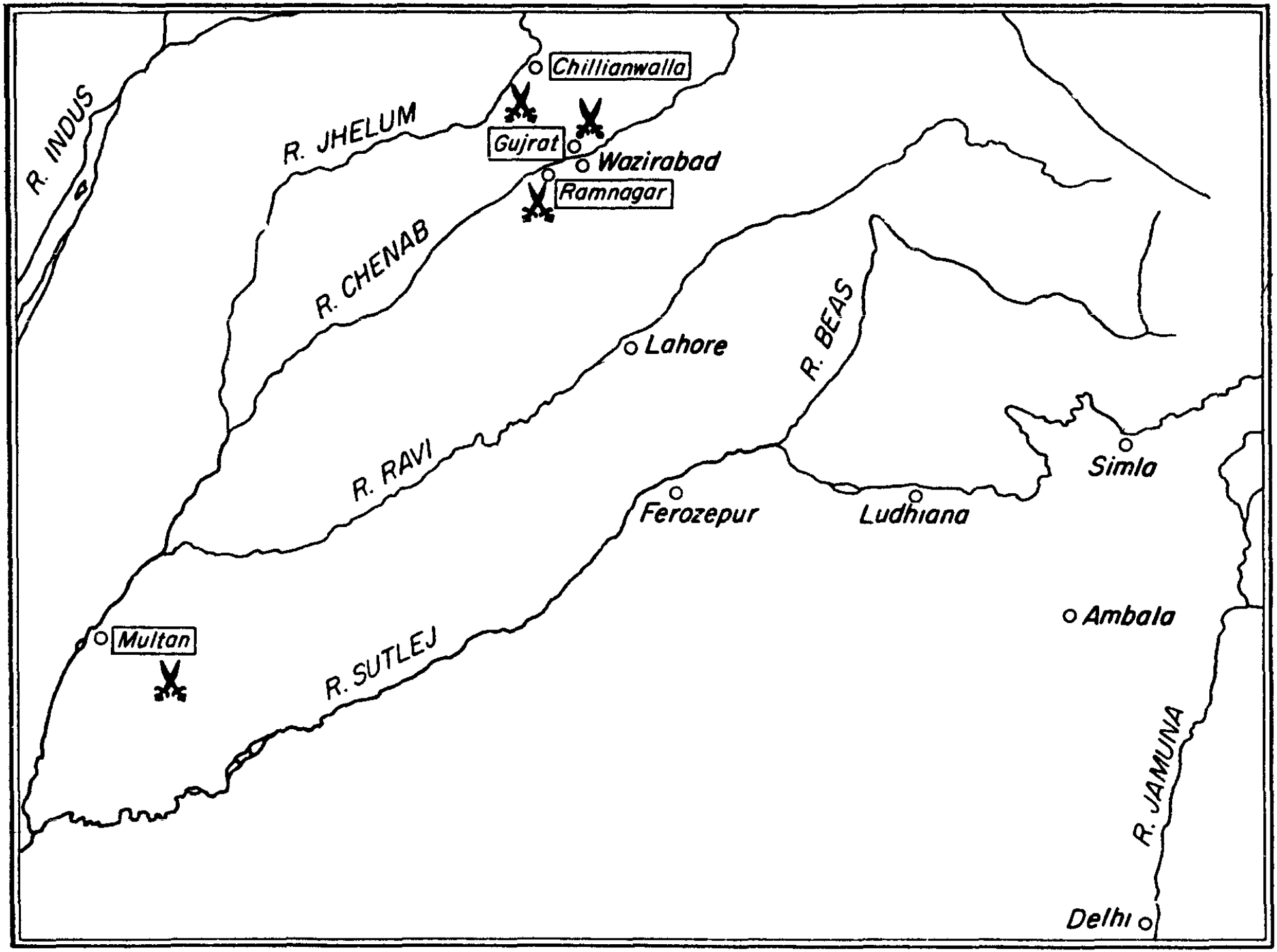
30 'I see around me and hear of so many men who having been generals and colonels in the Seikh army, are now struggling for existence.' Henry Lawrence, 29 April 1847, to the governor general. SC 112 of 16.6.1847.

4. Second Anglo-Sikh War

Lord Hardinge handed over the reins of office in January 1848, assuring his successor that 'it should not be necessary to fire a gun in India for some years to come.'[1] Hardinge's policy of bolstering a friendly but subservient Sikh (or Sikh-cum-Dogra) state as a breakwater against Central Asian Mohammedanism had foundered on the rocks of the Sikhs' refusal to befriend the British and be as hostile to the Pathans and the Afghans as was hoped. Hardinge was succeeded by a haughty young aristocrat, Lord Dalhousie. The mounting unrest in the Punjab gave the young laird the chance to reorientate British policy towards the Durbar. Instead of only weakening the Sikh state, he believed in 'grasping all rightful opportunities of acquiring territory or revenue as may from time to time present themselves.' The opportunity was not long in coming; and at an opportune moment. Henry Lawrence, who was against encroachment on the Durbar's powers, was away in England on sick leave. His brother, John, and Edward Currie, who acted as residents in his absence, belonged to Dalhousie's expansionist school.

The trouble began at Multan. Dewan Mulraj, was assessed by the resident to pay 20 lacs of rupees for his province. At the same time the district of Jhang, which formed a third of his estate, was taken from him. Mulraj agreed to these terms but was unable to fulfil them because the resident had abolished excise duty on

1 Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, I, 214.



SECOND ANGLO-SIKH WAR, 1848-1849

goods transported by river, which formed a substantial part of the income of Multan. Mulraj also resented his judgments' being reviewed by the resident. He submitted his resignation in December 1847. The resignation was accepted, but the dewan was persuaded to continue in office till March 1848, by which time the winter harvest would be gathered.

General Kahan Singh Man was chosen to succeed Mulraj. Two British officers, Vans Agnew of the civil service and Lieutenant Anderson, were sent down by river to superintend the take over. The Durbar party encamped outside the fort. The next day Mulraj welcomed Kahan Singh Man and the Englishmen, showed them round the fort, and formally presented them with the keys of the citadel. The Multan garrison was discharged, and the Durbar troops took over. As the Englishmen were passing out through the gate of the fort on their way back to camp, they were assaulted. In the melee that ensued, Vans Agnew, Lieutenant Anderson, and a few others were injured. Mulraj rode back to get help and sent a note to the Durbar camp regretting the incident. Vans Agnew acknowledged the dewan's note and exonerated him from all responsibility for the assault. He also sent a report to the resident stating clearly, 'I don't think Mulraj has anything to do with it. I was riding with him when we were attacked.'[2] He asked for help from Lieutenant Edwardes and General Van Cortlandt, who were at Dera Fateh Khan and Dera Ismail Khan, respectively.

The disbanded soldiery of Multan forced Mulraj to become their leader. They appealed to the Durbar troops to join them in expelling the feringhee. With the exception of Kahan Singh Man and a dozen or so others, the Durbar troops went over to

2 Edwardes, *A Year on the Punjab Frontier*, II, 78. Lt. Edwardes' note to the resident is pertinent. 'I think Mulraj has been involved in rebellion against his will, and being a weak man, is now persuaded by his officers that there is no hope for him but in going all lengths; that the origin of the rebellion was the natural dislike of the Pathans, Baluchis and Multanis (men of high family, courage and false pride) to be turned adrift, after a life spent in military service well rewarded and that these men will fight desperately, and die hard....' II, 100.

the Multanis. The next evening they mobbed the British camp and killed Vans Agnew and Lieutenant Anderson. Sikh soldiers issued an appeal to their co-religionists in the Punjab.

'Now we, in accordance with the guru's command, have written to all of you, our Khalsa brethren. Those of you who are true and sincere Sikhs, will come to us here. You will receive pay, and will be received honourably in the durbar of the guru....

'The Maharajah Duleep Singh will, by the guru's grace, be firmly established in his kingdom, the cow and the Brahmin will be protected and our holy religion will prosper....

'The maharajah and his mother are in sorrow and affliction. By engaging in their cause, you will obtain their favour and support. *Khālsājī*, gird up your loins under the protection of the guru and Guru Gobind Singh will preserve your honour. Make much of a few words. Dated 12 Baisakh 1905.' (22 April 1848.)

So strong was the feeling against the British that within a few days the Rechna Doab and the doab between the Chenab and the Indus swarmed with Pathan and Baluch swordsmen willing to make common cause with the Sikhs to reinstate a Hindu governor against the fiat of the feringhee.

The resident's (Edward Currie's) immediate reaction on getting news of the attack on Vans Agnew was to order troops to Multan. But the very next day, when he heard that both Vans Agnew and Lieutenant Anderson were dead and that the Durbar troops had joined the rebels, he countermanded his order. He summoned the council and told it plainly that since the rebellion was against the authority of the Durbar, it was up to the Durbar to suppress it. He preferred to ignore the provisions of the Treaty of Bhairowal by which British troops paid by the Durbar were kept specially for preserving the peace of the country.

Members of the council confessed their inability to cope with the situation.[3] Lord Dalhousie and his commander-in-chief (who

3 'The chiefs returned yesterday morning, and having heard what I had to say regarding the necessity of their putting down the rebellion, and bringing the offenders to justice, by their own means as the only hope of saving their government, they retired to consult and concert measures.

pleaded that it was the wrong time of the year for English soldiers to fight in the plains)[4] agreed with the resident to let the situation deteriorate and then exploit it to their advantage.[5]

The resident did his best to fan the flames of rebellion. Rani Jindan, who was under house arrest in Sheikhupura fort and did little besides squander money consulting soothsayers and feeding Brahmins, was ordered to be deported from the Punjab. The resident believed that, although 'legal proof of the delinquency would not perhaps be obtainable,' she was deeply implicated in a conspiracy to tamper with the loyalty of native soldiers.[6] Despite the unanimous disapproval of the hitherto pliable council of

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After much discussion they declared themselves unable, without British aid, to coerce Dewan Mulraj in Multan and bring the perpetrators of the outrage to justice. After what has happened, I feel that if the question were one merely affecting the maintenance of the Sikh Government and preserving the tranquillity of their provinces we should scarcely be justified in expending more British blood and British treasure in such service.' Currie to Dalhousie, 27 April 1848. L. 139/Bk. 178, Punjab Government Records.

4 Not all English officers were aware of what was passing in the minds of the governor general and the resident. Herbert Edwardes protested that: 'Some of the hardest campaigns in Indian history were fought in the hot weather, and men do not sicken when their minds are on the stretch.... There is an argument still stronger for our settling this affair ourselves. Our national faith as pledged in the treaty solemnly demands that we should do all in our power to preserve little Dalip's throne. Now if we wished to appropriate the country, and upset that throne, we have only to concentrate a Sikh army on Multan; and disloyalty would follow union, national insurrection would follow disloyalty, and the seizure of the Punjab in self-defence follow insurrection, as inevitably as the links of a chain. The world would acquit us, being ignorant of what we know; but, neither God, nor our conscience could do so.' Edwardes to Currie, 4 May 1848. L. 44/Bk.191, P.G.R.

5 'The Government of India had decided to let the Punjab abscess come to a head, and when ripe to lance it freely in the coming cold weather.' Thorburn, *The Punjab in Peace and War*, p. 101.

6 Three men were hanged in this conspiracy. Evidence of Jindan's guilt rested on the statement made by one of the condemned men prior to his execution. He also implicated General Kahan Singh Man as Jindan's agent to Mulraj. This part of the statement was disbelieved by the governor general.

regency, the order was carried out with due severity. Jindan was taken to Benares under heavy armed escort; her allowance was further reduced to Rs 1000 per month.

A wave of resentment swept over the Punjab. At the time of the Multan rebellion, there was perhaps no one who would shoulder a musket at Rani Jindan's bidding; a week after she had been removed from the state, there were few who would not lay down their lives for her sake. The resident admitted to the governor general: 'The Khalsa soldiery on hearing of the removal of the maharani were much disturbed: they said that she was the mother of all the Khalsa, and that as she was gone, and the young Dalip Singh in our hands, they had no longer anyone to fight for and uphold....'[7] Even Amir Dost Mohammed of Afghanistan, expressed sympathy with the people of the Punjab.[8]

The banishment of Jindan shook the confidence that the Durbar notables had placed in the British. Till this time they had been loyal because the British had saved them from the Khalsa army, guaranteed their possessions and privileges, and given them a sense of security.[9] But the removal of Jindan and the

7 Currie to Elliott, 25 May 1848; No. 515/W.E. 27.5.1848 P.G.R. George Lawrence at Peshawar records a conversation he overheard between two Sikh soldiers on the separation of Jindan and her son: they 'wondered whether we meant to play him [the young maharajah] fair.' One replied, 'Rely upon it they do; they always are true to their engagements.' 'Ah but,' said the other, 'the bait is great; can they withstand it!' Punjab Government Records, *Lahore Political Diaries 1846-49,* IV, 397.

8 'There can be no doubt that the Sikhs are daily becoming more and more discontented. Some have been dismissed from service, while others have been banished to Hindustan, in particular the mother of Maharajah Duleep Singh, who has been imprisoned and ill-treated. Such treatment is considered objectionable by all creeds and both high and low prefer death.' Dost Mohammed to Captain Abbott; enclosure 13 in No. 44, *Parliamentary Papers (1847–49).*

9 'The sirdars are true, I believe; the soldiers are false, I know.' Currie to the governor general, June 1848.

Edwardes echoed the same opinion: 'With respect to the sirdars, I believe them to be heart and soul on our side, which is the side of jagirs, titles, employments, and whole throats. But their force, with equal confidence, I report to be against us to a man.'

confiscation of the jagirs of those suspected of too close an association with her[10] caused them to question their attitude towards their 'protectors'. The family most concerned were the Attariwalas because Chattar Singh's daughter was engaged to Maharajah Dalip Singh. They overlooked the slights offered to Jindan in the hope that if all went well an Attariwala would become maharani of the Punjab and they would become the most powerful family in the state. Although both the aging Chattar Singh, who was *nāzim* in the north-west frontier districts, and his son, Sher Singh, who was a member of the Council of Regency, tacitly acquiesced in the expulsion of Jindan, they too began to suspect that the British had no intention of restoring the Punjab to Maharajah Dalip Singh when he came of age.

The policy of deliberate inactivity did not percolate down to the junior officers, among whom the most enterprising was Lieutenant Edwardes who, as we have noted earlier, received Vans Agnew's note at Dera Fateh Khan. He did not wait[11] for orders but asked Van Cortlandt to join him in his march on Multan. He raised levies from the neighbouring Muslim tribes as he went along. He crossed the Indus and occupied Leiah; then he withdrew from Leiah and captured Mangrota.[12] In mid-May, he and Van Cortlandt captured Dera Ghazi Khan and approached Multan from the south. Edwardes' spirited moves shamed the resident to action. He ordered General Whish and

10 Punjab Government Records, *Lahore Political Diaries 1846–49*, IV, 562.

11 Edwardes' comment on Lord Gough's reluctance to fight a campaign in the summer was forthright. 'As if the rebellion could be put off like a champagne tiffin with a three cornered note to Mulraj, to name a date more agreeable.' W. W. Hunter, *The Marquess of Dalhousie*, p. 73.

'This Doab is full of Puthan mercenaries in and out of employ, and entertaining those in the forts will, I have no doubt, secure the posts themselves. Indeed I am inclined to believe that the whole disturbance in Mooltan has originated in the dread of the dewan's Puthan troops of being thrown out of employ.' Punjab Government Records, *Lahore Political Diaries 1847–49*, v, 320.

12 On 8 May 1848, Edwardes received a note from the resident (dated 29 April) ordering him to keep away from Multan and restrict his activities to the Trans-Indus region. Ibid., p. 322.

Sher Singh Attariwala to Multan and induced the nawab of Bahawalpur to join in the assault.

Mulraj fought an engagement with the Bahawalpuris at Kineri (18 June 1848) and then withdrew. Edwardes and Van Cortlandt joined forces with the Bahawalpuris, pursued Mulraj, and inflicted another defeat on him at Saddosam (1 July 1848). Mulraj was compelled to withdraw to Multan. With the Durbar troops coming down from the north, and with Lake, Edwardes, and Van Cortlandt in full pursuit from the south, Mulraj's time seemed to be running out.

Bhai Maharaj Singh came to the beleaguered dewan's rescue. At the time of Jindan's deportation, he had been active in Majha. When he heard of the revolt in Multan, he proceeded southwards with his followers. He exhorted the people to join Mulraj's colours and assured them that it was written in the sau sākhī[13] that in sambat 1905 (1848) the Khalsa would regain sovereignty in the Punjab.

Durbar troops were sent in pursuit of Bhai Maharaj Singh. They overtook him near the Chenab and inflicted heavy casualties on his followers. The bhai managed to escape and joined Mulraj. His arrival raised the flagging spirits of the dewan, who was elevated from the status of a reluctant rebel to a national hero. What had been a local rebellion became a war of independence. From all over the Punjab came reports of troops declaring for Mulraj.

The Attariwalas turned against the British only when their suspicion that the British did not mean to honour the terms of the Treaty of Bhairowal turned to certainty. At the instance of

13 Many versions of this collection of prophecies ascribed to Guru Gobind Singh have plagued the Sikh community from time to time. Versions of this book (with appropriate changes) were circulated during the Mutiny of 1857 (they prophesied a joint Anglo-Sikh victory over the Mughals); by the Namdharis in the 1860s supporting the claim of Ram Singh to be a reincarnation of Guru Gobind Singh and the future ruler of Hindustan; by the supporters of Dalip Singh in the 1880s (prophesying his return to the Punjab as maharajah with the help of the Russians).

New editions of the sau sākhī continue to appear to boost the claims of impostors.

his father, Sher Singh persuaded Lieutenant Edwardes to write to the resident to fix a date for the marriage of Dalip Singh: the Attariwalas felt that the response would indicate how the minds of British officials were working. The resident promised to consider the matter but ended his note with words that could scarcely have reassured the Attariwalas. He wrote: 'I do not see how proceeding with the ceremonies of the maharajah's nuptials can be considered as indicative of any line of policy which the government may consider it right to pursue now or at any future time in respect of the administration of the Punjab.'[14]

Soon after this unsatisfactory reply, the relations between Chattar Singh Attariwala and Captain Abbott, who was meant to assist him, became extremely strained. Early in August 1848, without any provocation, Abbott roused the Muslim tribes against the Sikhs.[15] The tribesmen threatened to attack Haripur. For his own safety, Chattar Singh Attariwala ordered Colonel Canora (an American officer of the Durbar) to evacuate the fort for him. Canora refused to comply unless Abbott confirmed the order. The Attariwala ordered his troops to occupy the fort by force, Canora was killed while trying to fire on the Attariwala's troops. Abbott charged Chattar Singh with 'cold blooded murder'. The resident was constrained to reprimand Captain Abbott;[16] but a

14 Currie to Edwardes, 3 August 1848.

15 'I called upon them in the memory of their murdered parents, friends and relatives to rise and aid me in destroying the Sikh forces in detail.' Abbott to Currie, 17 August 1848.

16 He wrote: 'It is clear that whatever may have been the intention of the brigade (under Chattar Singh) no overt act of rebellion was committed by them till the initiative was taken by you by calling out the armed peasantry, and surrounding the brigade in its cantonment. I have given you no authority to raise levies, and organise paid bands of soldiers to meet an emergency, of the occurrence of which I have always been somewhat sceptical. It is much, I think, to be lamented...that you have judged of the purposes, and feelings and fidelity of the *nāzim* and the troops, from the report of spies and informers, very probably interested in misrepresenting the real state of affairs. None of the accounts that have yet been made justifies you in calling the death of Commedan Canora a murder, nor in asserting that it was premeditated by Sardar Chattar Singh.' Currie to Abbott, 19 August 1848.

few days later he confirmed the order of a subordinate investigating officer sequestrating Chattar Singh's jagirs and suspending him from the post of nāzim.[17] Chattar Singh, old and sick as he was,[18] had no option but to fight against the wrong done to him. He opened negotiations with Amir Dost Mohammed and his brother Sultan Mohammed. They agreed to support the Sikhs[19] against the British, provided Peshawar and the Derajat were restored to them. Chattar Singh also approached his friend Gulab Singh Dogra for help. The Dogra marched his troops up and down the Punjab frontier, keeping both the Sikhs and the British guessing about his real intentions.

At Multan, Sher Singh Attariwala heard of the way the resident had treated his aged father but refrained from taking a precipitate step; on 9 September, he fought alongside the British in an attempt to capture the fort.[20] But a few days later, when he had reason to believe that the British planned to kidnap him, he left the British camp with his troops. The next day he issued a proclamation:

'It is well known to all the inhabitants of the Punjab, to all the Sikhs, and those who have cherished the Khalsa and in fact the world at large, with what oppression, tyranny and violence, the feringhees have treated the widow of the great Maharajah Ranjit Singh and what cruelty they have shown towards the people of the country.'[21]

Sher Singh offered to join Mulraj. The dewan's suspicions had been aroused by a forged letter which the British contrived to let fall into his hands—in this letter Sher Singh was mentioned as privy to a plot to take Multan by stratagem—and Mulraj refused to admit Sher Singh in the fort. In sheer disgust Sher Singh left Multan to go to the assistance of his father. The defection of the

17 Nicholson to Currie, 20 August 1848.

18 Punjab Government Records, *Lahore Political Diaries 1846-49*, IV, 149.

19 Ibid., p. 267.

20 'The Sikhs fought splendidly—what pricks they are!' Pearse, *Journal Kept during the Siege of Multan* (mss), p. 48.

21 Enclosure in Edwardes to Currie, 16 September 1848. No. 1591/W.E. 23.9.1848, P.G.R.

Attariwalas was a signal for other sardars to declare for freedom. Thus did a minor fracas develop into a national revolt. Only at Lahore, Raja Tej Singh and a few of the same ilk held durbar in the name of a hapless minor and did as they were bid by the feringhee.

Lord Dalhousie was pleased with the course of events because it gave him the excuse he was waiting for. 'The insurrection in Hazara has made great head.... I should wish nothing better.... I can see no escape from the necessity of annexing this infernal country.... I have drawn the sword and this time thrown away the scabbard.'[22] He received the news of Sher Singh's defection with unconcealed pleasure because it had brought matters to that crisis that he had for months been awaiting. He noted, 'we are now not on the eve of but in the midst of war with the Sikh nation and kingdom of Punjab.' Before leaving Calcutta, Dalhousie made the declaration of war in his usual forthright manner. 'Unwarned by precedents, un-influenced by example, the Sikh nation has called for war and on my word, sir, they shall have it with a vengeance.'[23] He discreetly refrained from including the Durbar in his pronouncement so that British reinforcements could enter 'Lahore territories not as enemy to the constituted government but to restore order and obedience.'[24]

It was an unequal contest. Under the terms of the treaties of Lahore, 1846, most of the Punjabi guns had been surrendered and their army reduced to 20,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry. The peasantry had been disarmed. The British, on the other hand, had massed 50,000 trained soldiers along the Sutlej,

22 Baird, *Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie,* pp. 33–4.

23 Dalhousie to Currie, 8 October 1848. Trotter, *Life of Marquess of Dalhousie,* p. 38.

24 This confusion in the minds of British officers continued right through the campaign. Even the commander of the British forces, Lord Gough, was not sure whether he was fighting for or against the Durbar. His biographer writes: 'It was not till after leaving Lahore that he knew the definite decision of the governor general and that the war was to be against, and not in support of, the Durbar.... "I do not know," he said on the 15th, "whether we are at peace or war or who it is we are fighting for."' R. S. Rait, *The Life and Campaigns of Viscount Gough,* II, 178.

cantoned 9000 in Lahore and another 9000 at Ferozepur. Many of the most powerful forts—Lahore, Kangra, Sheikhupura—were in their hands.

The situation in November 1848 was somewhat as follows. The Chaj and the Sind Sagar Doabs had declared for freedom; the other doabs were under the British. There were two centres of resistance—one led by the Attariwalas in the north-west, the other by Mulraj in the south.

Sher Singh Attariwala passed close by Lahore; the rising of citizens that he expected did not take place. He heard of Lord Gough's advance to Lahore and retreated northwards to hold the British on the Chenab.

Gough marched up to the Chenab and came in sight of the Attariwala's forces on the opposite bank. The Punjabis crossed the river, captured the fort of Ramnagar, and repulsed a British force under General Campbell which attacked them.[25] Lord Gough came to the relief of Campbell. British forces crossed the Chenab at two points and engaged Sher Singh Attariwala in a sharp artillery duel near village Sadullapur.

British superiority in fire power compelled the Punjabis to abandon their positions on the Chenab and retreat to the Jhelum. They dug themselves in at a place where the river was behind them and an expanse of thick brushwood intersected by deep ravines was in front of them. The British took up their position about three miles south-east of the Punjabi entrenchments. For some time the two armies remained inactive. Then the Punjabis began to run short of provisions and tried to draw out the enemy from their position. News from other fronts induced the combatants to start hostilities on the Jhelum. Chattar Singh Attariwala

25 Ramnagar was not an engagement of any great consequence, but it gave a much needed boost to Punjabi morale. A British subaltern wrote: 'The enemy are in great feather, and ride along within half a mile of our camp and close to our pickets.' Sandford, *Leaves from the Journal of a Subaltern*, 24 November 1848, p. 66. The Punjabis captured a British gun and the colours of a regiment.

Sher Singh Attariwala sent a note to the British offering to stop hostilities if they promised to vacate Lahore. No notice was taken of this offer.

had liberated Attock and sent whatever troops he could spare and promised to join his son in an attack on the enemy. The British received even a greater fillip with the news from Multan. A British cannonball had fallen on the magazine in the fort, blowing up 400,000 lb of gunpowder and killing over five hundred of its defenders.[26] The tide of battle had turned in favour of the British. They awaited the arrival of their siege guns to compel Mulraj to surrender.

Battle of Chillianwala, 13 January 1849

The British[27] and the Punjabis jockeyed for position. Lord Gough tried to avoid the jungle and attack the Punjabis in the flank. Sher Singh Attariwala forestalled the move and took up another formation—with the jungles and ravines still separating him from the enemy.

On the afternoon of 13 January 1849, the British launched their attack. The Punjabis sighted them advancing from the direction of village Chillianwala and promptly opened fire. For an hour Punjabi guns kept the enemy at bay. When their fire slackened, the British, who had the advantage of numbers, charged in an attempt to force the Punjabis into the river. The Punjabis scattered into the brushwood jungle and began their harrying *dhāī phat* (hit and run) tactics.[28] The battle raged till the night enveloped both the armies. The Punjabis captured four British guns and the colours of three regiments. Chillianwala was the worst defeat suffered by the British since their occupation of

26 This was on 30 December 1848. General Kahan Singh Man and his son, who were confined in a dungeon, were killed in this explosion. Punjab Government Records, *Lahore Political Diaries 1847–49*, v, 329. Mulraj surrendered on 22 January 1849.

27 The Dogras under Col. Steinbach (one-time servant of the Durbar) and Rohillas, who deserted the Punjabis, joined the British at Chillianwala.

28 'The Sikhs,' wrote an English observer, 'fought like devils...fierce and untamed even in their dying struggle.... Such a mass of men I never set eye on and as plucky as lions: they ran right on the bayonets and struck at their assailants when they were transfixed.' Sandford, *Leaves from the Journal of a Subaltern*, pp. 106–8.

India.[29] Next morning the Punjabi guns boomed a twenty-one-gun salute to a Punjabi victory.[30]

Once again, as at Ferozeshahr, the Punjabis failed to drive home their advantage. Their own losses had been considerable, and they were not aware of the magnitude of the punishment they had inflicted on the enemy. The elements also came to the rescue of the British. As soon as the fighting stopped, it began to rain; for the next three days it poured incessantly, turning the ravines which separated the Punjabis from their quarry into deep moats. On the fourth day when the sun shone again on the sodden plain, the British pulled out of Chillianwala and retreated across the Chaj to the banks of the Chenab.[31]

29 The night was one of great terror for the British. General Thackwell wrote: 'Confusion pervaded the whole army. Fears were generally entertained that the enemy (the Punjabis) would attempt a night attack. If they had been enterprising and could have perceived the extent of their advantage, they would assuredly have thrown themselves on us.... The jungle which had befriended them in the commencement of the action now formed a protection to us.' The scene of the next morning is also painted by General Thackwell: 'Prince Albert hats and military shoes might be seen in all directions strewn on the ground in great abundance...the camp next day was overspread with funeral gloom.' And it might well have been, for nearly 3000 British lay dead or wounded in the ravines and brushwood. Thackwell, *Narrative of the Second Sikh War*, p. 73.

Lord Gough was superseded; Sir Charles Napier was appointed commander-in-chief.

30 The British also claimed Chillianwala as a victory. Lord Dalhousie, however, made candid admission of the true state of affairs in a private letter dated 22 January 1849, to Lord Wellington. He wrote: 'In public I make, of course, the best of things. I treat it as a great victory. But writing confidentially to you, I do not hesitate to say that I consider my position grave....' *The Marquess of Dalhousie*, p. 209.

31 British historians have commented adversely on the Sikh treatment of British prisoners and wounded; George Meredith, who published his first poem on Chillianwala, described them as 'the savage plundering devils doing their worst among the slain...the wounded and the dying.' A British subaltern wrote: 'Two of the 9000 lancers who were taken prisoners the other day were sent back this morning with Sher Singh's compliments. They seemed rather sorry to come back as they had been treated like princes, *pilāwed* with champagne and brandy to the mast-head and sent away with Rs 10 each in his pocket.' Sandford, *Leaves from the Journal of a Subaltern*, p. 12.

The Attariwalas sent George Lawrence, who was their captive, with terms for a truce. They asked for the investment of Dalip Singh as maharajah and the evacuation of British troops from the Punjab. The offer was rejected.

Battle of Gujarat, 21 February 1849

The Attariwalas advanced towards the Chenab and entrenched their forces in horseshoe formation between the town of Gujarat and the river. They were weaker both in guns (59 to the British 66) and in man power. The British attack began at 7:30 a.m. The Punjabis as usual opened fire too soon; they exhausted their ammunition and betrayed the position of their guns. In a cannonade lasting an hour, British guns silenced the Punjabi artillery.[32] Then their cavalry and infantry charged Punjabi positions. Afghan cavalry, which had joined the Punjabis, tried to deflect the enemy but withdrew without achieving its purpose. The Punjabis engaged the enemy in a hand-to-hand combat. 'In this action as well as at Chillianwala,' wrote General Thackwell, 'Seikhs caught hold of the bayonets of their assailants with their left hands and closing with their adversaries dealt furious sword blows with their right.... This circumstance alone will suffice to demonstrate the rare species of courage possessed by these men.'[33]

The weight of numbers and armour decided the issue. The Punjabis gave way. The British occupied Gujarat and pursued the Punjabis till they had destroyed all they could find.[34]

The battle of Gujarat ended organized Punjabi resistance to the feringhees. On 11 March 1849, the Attariwalas formally

32 General Thackwell remarked, 'The fidelity displayed by the Seikh gunners is worthy of record: the devotion with which they remained at their posts, when the atmosphere around them was absolutely fired by the British guns, does not admit description.' E. J. Thackwell, *Narrative of the Second Sikh War*, p. 213.

33 Ibid.

34 'Little quarter, I am ashamed to say, was given—and even those we managed to save from the vengeance of our men, I fear, were killed afterwards. But, after all, it is a war of extermination.' Sandford, *Leaves from the Journal of a Subaltern*, p. 155.

surrendered their swords to Major General Gilbert at Hurmuck near Rawalpindi.[35] They were followed on the 14th by the whole Sikh army. General Thackwell described the scene: 'The reluctance of some of the old Khalsa veterans to surrender their arms was evident. Some could not restrain their tears; while on the faces of others, rage and hatred were visibly depicted.' The remark of one veteran grey beard as he put down his gun summed up the history of the Punjab: '*Āj Raṅjīt Singh mar gayā*'—today Ranjit Singh has died.

On 29 March 1849, a durbar was assembled in the fort. A proclamation was made declaring the kingdom of the Sikhs at an end. Maharajah Dalip Singh handed over the Koh-i-noor diamond and stepped down from his illustrious father's throne—never to sit on it again.

35 *Secret Dispatch to the Secret Committee No. 18.* 21 March 1849. When the Attariwalas and their armies laid down their arms, many men resolved to continue the struggle. Narain Singh was captured alive; Colonel Rachpal Singh was killed near Aligarh. On the night of 28 December 1849, Bhai Maharaj Singh on whose head there was a price of Rs 10,000 was taken with a band of twenty-one unarmed followers. 'The guru is no ordinary man,' wrote Mr Vansittart, who had arrested him. 'He is to the natives what Jesus is to the most zealous of Christians.' SC 49 of 25.1.1850. The government could not risk a public trial in India, and decided to deport him to Singapore. For several years, the bhai was kept in a solitary cell. He died on 5 July 1856.

Mulraj was tried for murder and found guilty. The sentence of death was commuted to one of transportation for life. He died near Benares on 11 August 1851.

PART II

CONSOLIDATION OF BRITISH POWER IN THE PUNJAB

Ten years of anarchy and two sanguine wars against the English deprived the Sikhs of the will to resist the annexation of their kingdom. The English also sensed that the best way of ruling the Punjab was to temper autocratic power with justice ('I shall rule you with pen or sword,' said John Lawrence) and to have a contented peasantry. The Board of Administration demilitarized the Punjab, restored the rule of law, and opened opportunities of employment to the Punjabis. Although all services were open to them, preference was shown by the British in recruiting men of different communities for different kinds of work: Hindus, being more educated than the others, were preferred for clerical jobs; Muslims for the police; and, after reassuring themselves of their loyalty, the Sikhs for the army. The policy was extremely successful; in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, when the rest of northern India rebelled against the government, the Punjabis sided with the British.

After the mutiny, the government resumed its programme of public works: of building roads, railways, schools, and hospitals.

The greatest of these public undertakings was the digging of canals and the reclamation of desert lands in the doabs between the Punjab rivers. The Punjab became the granary of India. Sikhs who were chosen to colonize many of these barren wastes became the most prosperous peasantry in Asia. It was not surprising that they became the staunchest supporters of the British Raj, because—in the words of the governor general, Lord Dufferin—'their future was merged with that of the British Empire in India'.

PDF created by Rajesh Arya - Gujarat

5. Annexation of the Punjab

Lord Dalhousie did not believe in half-measures. Even before the Punjabis had laid down arms, he had resolved to decimate Sikh political power.[1] 'The right to annex the Punjab is beyond cavil,' he wrote.[2] He had, however, to contend with the

1 'There never will be peace in the Punjab so long as its people are allowed to retain the means and the opportunity of making war. There never can be now any guarantee for the tranquillity of India until we shall have effected the entire subjection of the Sikh people and destroyed its power as an independent nation.' *Governor General's Dispatch to the Secret Committee No. 20 of 1849.*

2 Baird, *Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie*, p. 30. In his dispatch to the Secret Committee dated 7.4.1849, Dalhousie gave three reasons for the annexation. Firstly, that while the British had observed the Treaties of Lahore and Bhairowal, the Durbar had not, inasmuch as that it had not paid even a rupee towards the annual subsidy of 22 lacs of rupees nor sent troops against Mulraj. Secondly, that the Durbar army and the people led by the 'sirdars of the state, the signers of the treaties, the members of the Council of Regency itself' (one of whom had 'commanded the Sikh army in the field') had risen against the British. Thirdly, the Sikhs had invited the Afghans to fight the British.

Mahajan in *Circumstances leading to the Annexation of the Punjab 1846–49* (p. 126) followed by Ganda Singh in *Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars* (p. 158) accuses Dalhousie of deliberately misrepresenting the facts given in the first reason, viz. that no portion of the annual subsidy was paid by the Lahore Durbar, and quotes a letter from the resident at Lahore to the governor general dated 23 February 1848 reporting the payment of over Rs 13 lacs in gold into British treasury to support their

opinions of some senior colleagues, notably Henry Lawrence, who had hurried back from England and resumed his post as resident. Henry Lawrence was against annexation.[3] John Lawrence was with Dalhousie in holding that the case for annexation was 'both undeniable and pressing'. Lord Hardinge and later the Court of Directors of the East India Company also backed Dalhousie.[4] Assured of this support, the governor general instructed Henry Lawrence to draft the proclamation of annexation. Henry did not have his heart in the job, and he also desired to accept personally the surrender of Dewan Mulraj. When

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contention. It is clear, however, from the accounts maintained by the resident of Lahore that this gold was credited against debts owed by the Lahore Durbar to the British government prior to the Treaty of Bhairowal (SC 245 of 30.12.1848) and that a loan made by the British government to the Lahore Durbar in April 1847 was still due for repayment at the time of annexation (SC 78 of 2.5.1851). Still less was there money available to meet the annual subsidy, the first payment of which was debited in May 1848.

Dalip Singh was much later to compare his case to a betrayal of guardianship when he agitated for the return of his kingdom. 'I was a ward of the British nation; and it was unjust on the part of the guardian to deprive me of my kingdom in consequence of a failure in the guardianship.' (Letter in *The Times*, 8 September 1882.)

3 'My opinion, as already more than once expressed in writing to your Lordship, is against annexation. I did think it unjust: I now think it impolitic.' Henry Lawrence to Dalhousie, 2 February 1849.

Henry Lawrence's desire, according to his biographer, Herbert Edwardes, was to 'erect that great mystical Khalsa corporation of the Sikhs into an aristocratic state, at once leaning on and lending support to our empire on the side of the northwest; to make it after the death of Runjeet, an allied and independent power—to reconcile it when hostile, to spare it when subdued, and to utilise its great military force as a barrier against Afghanistan, and, if need were, against Russia. The rebellion of 1848—which broke out in his absence, but of which he had not foreseen the probability—rudely disturbed, but did not wholly dissipate his dream.' Edwardes and Merivale, *Life of Sir Henry Lawrence*, p. 470.

4 'The energy and turbulent spirit of the Sikhs are stated by one section (of politicians here) as ground for not annexing. In my judgment, this is the argument which would dispose me, if I were on the spot, to annex.' Hardinge to Henry Lawrence. W. W. Hunter, *The Marquess of Dalhousie*, p. 83.

Dalhousie reacted strongly to Henry's draft and his wish to appear as the arbiter of the Punjab's destiny,[5] Henry put in his resignation. He was persuaded by his friends to withdraw it and, despite being overruled and snubbed, agreed to carry out the orders of the governor general. Dalhousie ordered the removal of Maharajah Dalip Singh from the Punjab.[6] The Sikh flag was

5 'I now remark on the proclamation you have proposed. It is objectionable in matter because, from the terms in which it is worded, it is calculated to convey to those who are engaged in this shameful war an expectation of much more favourable terms, much more extended immunity from punishment, than I consider myself justified in granting them. It is objectionable in manner; because (unintentionally, no doubt) its whole tone substitutes you personally, as the resident at Lahore, for the government which you represent. It is calculated to raise the inference that a new state of things is arising; that the fact of your arrival with a desire to bring peace to the Punjab is likely to affect the warlike measures of the government; and that you have come as a peacemaker for the Sikhs, as standing between them and the government. This cannot be.... There must be entire identity between the government and its agent, whoever he is.... I repeat, that I can allow nothing to be said or done, which should raise the notion that the policy of the Government of India, or its intentions, depend on your presence as resident in the Punjab.... I do not seek for a moment to conceal from you that I have seen no reason whatever to depart from the opinion that the peace and vital interests of the British Empire now require that the power of the Sikh Government should not only be defeated, but subverted, and their dynasty abolished.' Edwardes and Merivale, *Life of Sir Henry Lawrence*, pp. 433–4.

6 Having convinced himself that the Sikh nation was to be subverted, Dalhousie maintained that he could not permit himself to be turned aside from fulfilling the duty which he owed to the security and prosperity of millions of British subjects 'by a feeling of misplaced and mistimed compassion for the fate of a child.' W. W. Hunter, *The Marquess of Dalhousie*, p. 82.

The rest of the careers of Dalip Singh and his mother are of more human than historical interest. In 1853 Dalip Singh was converted to Christianity. A year later he and his cousin, Prince Shiv Dev Singh, left for England. Dalip Singh was given an estate at Elvedon in Suffolk. He became a great favourite of Queen Victoria, who treated him as her godson. Rani Jindan, who had escaped to Nepal, later joined him in England where she died in 1863. Dalip Singh brought his mother's ashes to India. On his way back to England he married, in Alexandria, Bamba Muller, the daughter

lowered, the Union Jack hoisted on the ramparts of the Lahore fort. Sikh currency, of which there were many varieties (*nānakśāhī, harī singhī, gobind śāhī,* etc.), was withdrawn, and the Company's *sicca* rupee introduced.

Demilitarizing the Punjab

The Punjab's cities and villages were placarded with notices demanding the surrender of arms. More than 120,000 stands of arms of matchlocks, swords, and other weapons were voluntarily handed over. A muster of the Durbar's forces was called at Lahore. A small number of troops were retained; the rest of the army was disbanded. Forts and defensive fortifications—practically every Punjabi village had defensive bastions—were levelled. The only part of the erstwhile kingdom which was not demilitarized was the district of Peshawar. (The exception was made on the ground that there was not a large enough British force to defend the people of the area from the incursions of tribal raiders.) All military grants were abolished.[7]

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of a German merchant through an Ethiopian woman. They had five children, two sons and three daughters.

Dalip Singh lived beyond his means and ran into debt. He tried to reclaim his kingdom through an appeal first to the British government and then to the Privy Council. When that failed, he tried to interest European powers in helping him recapture his kingdom. He began to describe himself as the 'implacable foe of the British people'. He announced his reconversion to the Sikh faith and opened correspondence with several Indian princes and Sikh chieftains. The bout of megalomania lasted till he discovered that no one really took him seriously. Many Sikh organizations passed resolutions condemning him and advising him to seek the forgiveness of the queen. In 1890 Dalip Singh's debts were paid and he was granted the queen's pardon. After the death of Bamba Muller, Dalip Singh remarried in June 1889, Ada Douglas Wetherell. He died on 22 October 1893, of paralysis and was buried a week late at Elvedon.

7 Dalhousie overruled Henry Lawrence, who recommended leniency towards holders of military jagirs. He wrote; 'Nothing is granted to them [the military jagirdars] but maintenance. The amount of that is open to discussion, but their property of every kind will be confiscated to the state.... In the interim let them be placed somewhere under surveillance;

Board of Control

There were diverse views on the sort of government that would best suit the Punjab. Sir Charles Napier, who had taken over as commander-in-chief from Lord Gough, was of the opinion that the Punjab, like Sindh, should have military rule. Others believed that, like the rest of India, it should be ruled by civilians. Lord Dalhousie decided to combine the two by giving the Punjab a civil administration manned by both civilian and army officers.[8] He established a Board of Administration consisting of three members. Henry Lawrence was appointed president and entrusted with matters connected with defence and relations with the sardars. John Lawrence was put in charge of the settlement of land and other fiscal matters. C. G. Mansel was entrusted with the administration of justice and the police.[9] These three thus constituted the heart, the backbone, and the arm of the Punjab's body-politic. The Board was made the final court of appeal with powers of life and death. It was also charged with regulating matters of excise, revenue, and police.

'You shall have the best men in India to help you,' wrote Dalhousie to Henry Lawrence. He sent to the Punjab the most

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but attach their property till their destination is decided. If they run away, our contract is void. If they are caught, I will imprison them. And if they raise tumult again, I will hang them, as sure as they now live and I live then.' W. W. Hunter, *The Marquess of Dalhousie*, p. 99.

8 The disagreement between Sir Charles Napier and Dalhousie became quite acrimonious and personal. Napier described Dalhousie as 'the young Scots laird...as weak as water and as vain as a pretty man or an ugly woman.' Dalhousie in no uncertain terms told Sir Charles to mind his own business. 'I have been warned, Sir Charles,' wrote Dalhousie, 'not to let you encroach upon my authority and I will take good care you shall not.' Arnold, *The Marquis of Dalhousie's Administration of British India*, I, 225. This however, did not deter Sir Charles from expressing his contempt for the Board, 'Boards rarely have any talent and that of the Punjab offers no exception to the rule.'

9 Montgomery later replaced Mansel. The president did not however have the power to overrule his colleagues in matters specifically assigned to them.

experienced Englishmen available in India. Of the 56 covenanted officers, 29 were from the army and 27 from the civil service. The policy Henry Lawrence followed was to 'rule by strength rather than precision.'[10] Every civil functionary from a member of the Board down to the humblest kārdār was vested with judicial, fiscal, and magisterial powers.

Two regions, the Cis-Sutlej and the Trans-Sutlej, were re-united to the Punjab. The Punjab along with the Trans-Indus territories which were placed under the same administration comprised of an area of about 73,000 square miles. Its population was roughly estimated at 10 million.

The Punjab was divided into seven divisions or commissionerships, which were further divided into districts (on which there were 25 in the province). A five-tiered administration was set up. Next to the Board were the commissioners of the seven divisions. Below the commissioners were deputy and assistant commissioners; and below them, extra assistant commissioners—a cadre specially constituted to provide jobs for 'such natives as might have filled offices of trust under the Durbar'.[11] The lowest grade of gazetted officer was the *tehsīldār*, whose civil powers extended to deciding cases up to the value of Rs 300.

The Board at Work

Defence was given top priority. The Guide Corps, which had been raised by Henry Lawrence in 1846, was increased in strength and included troops of horse as well as infantry. Recruits were drawn from the toughest elements in the country; professional hunters and even brigands were accepted. The Guides were charged with guarding the chain of fortresses which were built to prevent tribal incursions from the north-west and with maintaining peace in the Derajat. For internal security ten regiments, five cavalry and five infantry, were raised. Some of the Durbar's soldiers were absorbed in these regiments. A military police

10 C. L. Tupper, chief secretary, Punjab government, in paper read to the East India Association, 25 July 1891.

11 *Punjab Administration Report, 1849–50 & 1850–51*, para. 91.

force consisting of 8000 men, largely Punjabi Mussalmans, was raised. The foot constabulary was meant to guard treasuries and gaols, the mounted police to patrol highways. A secret intelligence service (*khufiā*) police comprised of informers and detectives (*jasūs*) was attached to the police to keep the government in touch with the political temper of the people. Also attached to the police were professional trackers (*pagī, khojī* or *khure pat*), who brought with them their uncanny gifts for following spoors of missing cattle over long, dusty tracks. The old village watch-and-ward was revived. Village watchmen—*caukīdārs*—continued to be employed by the villagers but were expected to keep the police informed of the movements of strangers.

These new units of the police and the army numbered over 50,000 men. Special precautions were taken in policing the Majha, where Bhai Maharaj Singh and his two colleagues, Colonel Rachpal Singh and Narain Singh, were reported to be active.

Once the peace of the province was assured, the Board started on a programme of public works. The Grand Trunk Road from Peshawar to Delhi was reopened; work was started on connecting the bigger cities and military outposts.[12]

The Punjab had a fairly extensive network of canals. The Public Works Department cleared the Hasli (which supplied water to the many temple-tanks in Amritsar and the Shalamar Gardens in Lahore), made plans to extend it and to dig branch canals. Trees were planted on the banks of canals and alongside roads. Rest houses (*dāk* bungalows) were built to accommodate officials on tour. A programme of afforestation of barren lands was taken in hand. In the districts of Lahore, Gurdaspur, and Gujranwala, a million saplings were planted. These included as many as ninety different varieties of timber. Large tracts were

12 The 264 miles from Lahore to the frontier crossed 103 large and 459 small bridges and went through six mountain ranges. *The Punjab Administration Report of 1849–50 & 1850–51* claimed that in the first two years after annexation: '1349 miles of road have been cleared and constructed; 853 miles are under construction; 2487 miles have been traced and 5272 miles surveyed, all exclusive of minor cross and branch roads' (para. 346).

set apart as grasslands—*rakh*. Landholders were encouraged to plant trees, and coppice lands were exempted from taxation.

The Board's greatest contribution, however, was in improving the condition of the agriculturists who formed the vast bulk of the population. New varieties of crops were introduced. New Orleans cotton, sugarcane, flax, tobacco, and a variety of root crops began to be grown in the plains; tea was planted on the slopes of the Murree hills and in the Kangra Valley. The Punjab had already a large number of mulberry trees; the import of silkworms gave sericulture a boost. Italian merino rams were crossed with local breeds, with beneficial results for both the yield of meat and wool.

The full impact of the changes in the system of revenue introduced by John Lawrence when he was acting resident was now felt. Despite the reduction in the rate of assessment, revenue from land increased from 130 lacs of rupees in 1849 to 160 lacs in 1851. The Board was able to show a balance sheet with surpluses of 102 and 96 lacs, respectively, for the first two years in which it administered the province.[13]

Steps to regularize taxes had also been initiated before annexation. The Durbar had as many as 48 different kinds of levy and maintained innumerable octroi posts. The Board confirmed the abolition of all internal duties and built a chain of octroi posts on the frontiers to collect taxes on imports. Excise was levied on spirits and drugs; tolls were charged on ferries;

13 *Punjab Administration Report, 1849–50 & 1850–51*, paras. 264, 402–5. The surpluses were however largely the result of confiscation of jagirs and the sale of Durbar property. And it is also relevant to mention that the expenditure of the province took no account of the cost of maintaining regular troops.

Dalhousie instructed a Dr Jamieson to make a report on the physical features, geology, flora, and fauna of the annexed territories; Dr Fleming was instructed to report on the possibility of further exploiting the salt range and the mineral resources of the sub-montane areas. A French mineralogist, M. Marcadien, surveyed Kangra; his report confirmed the existence of rich iron ores in the Kangra region. (SC 115–16 of 23.9.1853.) In Spiti and the Kulu uplands, borax was found. In 1891 the first oil wells were bored near Rawalpindi and Attock. *Civil and Military Gazette*, 29 January 1891.

the salt mines were taken over and, instead of being farmed out to contractors, were exploited by the state itself with a levy of Rs 2 per maund. (Import of salt from Rajasthan was prohibited.) The Board more than made up the loss of revenue from the abolition of internal levies by introducing stamp duty on civil suits. Thus the complicated tax structure of the Durbar, which yielded only 16 lacs per year, was simplified and yet made to yield a quarter of a lac more. It also had the further advantage of saving the common man from the caprice of officials.

Evil practices such as the destruction of female children on birth, satī, etc. were forbidden. Marriage customs, dowry, divorce were modified to ameliorate hardship on women. Rules of inheritance of property were recognized.[14] Since the tehsīldār was the only official conversant with these rules and customs, he was entrusted with the necessary judicial powers. Village pañcāyats were allowed to function in less important matters affecting the village community. In cities, town councils were constituted to advise and assist English magistrates on civil matters.

The Board discovered to its surprise that the incidence of literacy was higher in the erstwhile Punjab kingdom than in some British provinces[15]—the Punjab had many elementary schools, including 16 for girls in Lahore. The Board allowed the native madrasās to function and in addition set up a number of central schools for higher education in the bigger cities. It also decided

14 Four years after annexation, Sir Richard Temple with a revenue official as assistant drew up the *corpus juris* consisting of the laws and customs of the Punjab. This became the Punjab Civil Code of 1854, and, although it did not receive official sanction, it was administered for sixteen years throughout the province. Later Sir James Stephen, law member of the viceroy's council from 1869–72, drafted legislation for the Punjab. Crime was regulated by the Indian Penal Code, revenue by the Punjab Land Revenue Act, and several matters by the Punjab Laws Act (which superseded the Punjab Civil Code). An amendment by Sir George Campbell provided that local custom be given priority to enforce the tribal and family customs of the Punjab as long as they were not opposed to justice, equity, and good conscience.

15 Arnold, *The Marquis of Dalhousie's Administration of British India*, I, 345.

to continue the use of Persian for official records in the new annexed region and Urdu for eastern Punjab.

The administration by the Board was an unqualified success. It brought peace and prosperity to the country which had passed through ten years of civil strife. In August 1852 the Board presented a report on its work in the first two years. It stated with pride that 'in no part of India had there been more perfect quiet than in the territories lately annexed.' It also complimented the people it had to deal with. 'There are less prejudices and elements of hindrance in the Punjab than elsewhere.... Sikh fanaticism is dying out, the Hindus are less superstitious and priest ridden and the Mohammedans less bigoted and less bound by traditional practice than their co-religionists in any part of India.'[16] The governor general and directors of the East India Company felicitated the Board 'for the prosperous and happy result'.

How did the change affect the Sikh community? The succession of defeats in the field of battle in addition to the knowledge of betrayal of national interests disillusioned the Sikh rank and file with the royal family and the aristocracy. Consequently, much as Bhai Maharaj Singh was respected, he was unable to arouse enthusiasm among the masses to continue fighting for the Durbar; when he was arrested and deported to Singapore, there was hardly any agitation among the Sikhs.

Dalhousie expelled the royal family and liquidated the Sikh nobility of the Trans-Sutlej region.[17] Sikh peasants and soldiers were suspect and given little chance for employment in the army

16 'To deal with the best manhood of India, we had the best men of the Indian Government, the warmest interest of the governor general himself, and a lavish employment of time, labour and treasure. It was an imperial experiment, imperially conducted, and crowned with, an auspicious result which must be divided between the rulers and the ruled.' Ibid., I, 351.

17 Personal and service jagirs of 25 Sikh chiefs were confiscated. SC 68–71 of 26.5.1849. The Sikhs had no educated middle class; consequently, of the eleven extra assistant commissioners, the Board was able to select only one Sikh.

or the police force, both of which were largely Muslim. Under the circumstances it was not very surprising that the militant spirit of the disbanded Khalsa soldiery (over 40,000 of whom were let loose after the Anglo-Sikh wars) turned to crime. The central districts of the Punjab became infested with dacoits, almost all of whom were Sikhs. Thuggee became rampant—most of the fraternity being either Mazhabi or Sainsi Sikhs. The government was constrained to appoint a superintendent for the suppression of thuggeeism,[18] and the crime was put down with a firm hand.

The most important effect of annexation was the new relationship between Sikhs and Hindus. It has already been noted that, from the time the Khalsa became a political power, large numbers of Hindus, who had looked upon it as the spearhead of Hinduism, had nominally accepted the *pahul* (baptism). During Sikh rule the distinction between Sikh and Hindu became one of mere form; the Khalsa wore their hair and beards unshorn, the Hindus did not. For the rest, Brahmanical Hinduism had come back into its own. The new Sikh Jat nobility aped the practices of Hindu Rajput princes; they worshipped Hindu gods alongside their own Granth, venerated the cow, went on pilgrimages to Hindu holy places, fed Brahmins, consulted astrologers and soothsayers, and compelled widows to immolate themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands. Among certain sections, notably the Bedis, the caste to which Guru Nanak had belonged, the practice of killing female children on birth had been revived.[19]

18 Mr Brereton made a detailed report on the thug fraternity in the Punjab. He mentions a Mazhabi Sikh, Wazir Singh, as the founder of the order in the province. He was eventually caught and hanged. Sher Singh introduced vigorous measures to suppress thuggee but the period of anarchy following his murder was favourable to the growth of the crime. FC 259 of 14.1.1853.

19 John Lawrence had come across this practice when he was commissioner of Jullundur Doab. When renewing the leases of the landholders he made them repeat loudly: '*Bevā mat jalāo*'—Do not burn widows. '*Betī mat māro*'—Do not kill daughters. '*Koṛhī mat dabāo*'—Do not bury lepers. Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, I, 197.

As soon as power passed out of Sikh hands, large number of Hindus who had adopted the practices of the Khalsa abandoned them to return to orthodox Hinduism. With them went a considerable number of those who had been Khalsa for several generations. In the two short visits that Lord Dalhousie made to the Punjab he was able to detect this tendency. 'Their great Gooroo Govind sought to abolish caste and in a great degree succeeded,' noted the governor general. 'They are however, gradually relapsing into Hindooism; and even when they continue Sikhs, they are yearly Hindooified more and more; so much so, that Mr now Sir Geo. Clerk (governor of Bombay, 1847–8) used to say that in 50 years the sect of the Sikhs would have disappeared. There does not seem to be warrant for this view, though it is much more likely now than six months ago.'[20]

John Lawrence's biographer states that infanticide was not only practised by Rajputs but was universal among the Bedis... 'they had never allowed a single female child to live.' Ibid., I, 206.

This statement appears somewhat exaggerated. Amongst the practices that Guru Gobind Singh forbade was infanticide. He excommunicated *kuṛīmārs* (those who killed female children) and disallowed them admission to Sikh temples. His injunction still stands imprinted in large letters at the entrance of the *Akāl Takht* alongside the Golden Temple.

Two years after annexation, the deputy commissioner of Gurdaspur reported the continuance of this crime among the Bedis. Thereafter it was discovered that it was prevalent also among Hindu and Muslims Rajputs, that is, everywhere with the exception of the districts of Leiah, Dera Ismail Khan, Peshawar, and Hazara. FC 185–90 of 9.9.1853. On the Divali of 1853 a large meeting of Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus, was called in Amritsar, where the matter was discussed and resolutions condemning the practice were passed. Thereafter similar meetings were held in various towns in the province. A code of rules restricting the size of dowries—one of the chief reasons for the destroying of female children—was drawn up. Within a few months infanticide ceased to be practised.

20 Letter of 7 May 1849. Baird, *Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie*, p. 69.

'With the disappearance of the Khalsa prestige, these votaries have fallen off; they joined in hundreds, and have deserted in thousands. The ranks of Hindooism receive them again, and their children will never drink the *pahul* at Amritsar.' Arnold, *The Marquis of Dalhousie's Administration of British India*, I, 386.

Break-up of the Board

The differences between Henry Lawrence and his brother, John, had often strained relations to the breaking point (Montgomery confessed that he had to serve as a 'regular buffer between two high powered engines'). In these disputes Lord Dalhousie openly showed preference for John and often went out of the way to belittle Henry.[21] The conflict came to a head when both brothers put in their resignations. Dalhousie promptly abolished the Board, transferred Henry Lawrence to Rajputana, and appointed John Lawrence chief commissioner of the Punjab. This change was more one of form than of substance as John continued to be assisted by two 'principal commissioners'. Montgomery remained in charge of the judiciary as well as education, roads, police, local and municipal administration. George Edmonstone was appointed financial commissioner.

Once John Lawrence was left to himself, he began to see the wisdom in the policies which his brother had advanced and he (John) had opposed. His handling of jagirs and rent-free tenures, of which over 60,000 still remained to be decided, was liberal enough to evoke a sharp rebuke from the governor general. The most important aspect of John Lawrence's administration was his success in winning over the Sikh masses. When he was convinced that the Sikh peasantry had little sentiment for the restoration of a Sikh state, he allowed them to be recruited for the army. The peasants joined the Company's forces with enthusiasm. Their performance in the skirmishes against Pathan tribesmen and in the Anglo-Burmese War (1852) encouraged the British commanders to enlist them in larger numbers.

21 In a letter of 13 June 1851, Henry wrote to his brother John: 'I am at a loss to understand the governor general.... Bad enough to snub us when we are wrong, intending to do right; but to be insulted by assumptions and tittle tattle is too bad.... One works oneself to death, and does everything publicly and privately to aid the views of a man who vents his impertinences on us, in a way which would be unbecoming if we were his servants.' Edwardes and Merivale, *Life of Sir Henry Lawrence*, pp. 441–2.

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6. Sikhs and the Mutiny of 1857

Causes of the Mutiny

Causes of the Mutiny of 1857 can be traced back to some well-intentioned but ill-timed measures introduced by successive governors general: Amherst, Bentinck, Auckland, Ellenborough, and Dalhousie. These measures adversely affected all classes, ranging from princes and landowners to peasants and sepoys—most of all the sepoys.

Many states were annexed when their rulers failed to produce natural heirs. Nana Sahib, the last of the Peshwas, was deprived of his pension. The rani of Jhansi, was informed that on her death her state would lapse to the British. These two became leaders of the Maratha rebels.[1] The crowning act of perfidy was the annexation of Oudh.[2] The people of Hindustan began to say: 'If

1 Other important states taken over were Sambalpur, Satara, Tanjore, Nagpur, Murshidabad, and Carnatic. Of the last named the following note is recorded in the *Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie.* 'The young nawab of the Carnatic died suddenly a week ago. He has left no son, and it is probable that the title will now be made to cease; if so, it will be another windfall for the Company, and another text for abuse of my insatiable rapacity and inordinate ambition' (p. 359).

2 'The King has refused to sign the treaty offered to him. Accordingly the Government of India has assumed the government of Oudh. The King has issued a proclamation calling on all his subjects to render obedience to the British Government. So our gracious Queen has 5,000,000 more subjects and £1,300,000 more revenue than she had yesterday.' Ibid.

the British Government dethrones a king who has ever been so faithful to them, what independent nawab or raja is safe?'[3] Even the Mughal royal family was not spared. Lord Dalhousie extracted an understanding from the emperor's favourite son that the Red Fort of Delhi would be handed over to the British after his father's demise. Although the royal family had ceased to be of political consequence, people had sentimental attachment to the dynasty of Babar and looked upon the Red Fort and its palace with nostalgic affection.

Landowning classes were affected by measures designed to eliminate large estates and by demands for documentary evidence of titles—a practice till then not prevalent in the country.[4]

English officials were not close enough to the people to realize how innocuous measures could be misconstrued by the illiterate masses. Thus the abolition of satī, validation of widow remarriage, legislation enabling converts to inherit ancestral property were passed at a time[5] when Christian missionaries were claiming large numbers of proselytes, thus strengthening the Indians' conviction that the English rulers meant to destroy their ancient faiths and traditions.

The sepoys were particularly affected by the anti-British feeling that prevailed in the country. Orders forbidding the wearing of caste marks, beards, or turbans were looked upon by them as infringements of religious rights.[6] Superstitious Hindus lent a willing ear to the gossip that their ration of flour had bones of animals ground and mixed in it. When, in the autumn of 1856, the old musket, the Brown Bess, was replaced by the

3 Norgate and Phillott, *From Sepoy to Subedar*, p. 112.

'The unjust appropriation of Oudh,' states a contemporary English writer, was 'a finishing stroke to a long course of selfish seeking of our own benefit and aggrandisement.' Mrs Harris, *A Lady's Diary of the Siege of Lucknow*, p. 60.

4 The Inam Commission operating in Bombay and the land settlement of Bengal caused great uneasiness among the zamindars of the two provinces.

5 The act was passed in 1850.

6 Such orders had been passed in 1806 and led to a serious mutiny in Vellore.

more efficient Enfield rifle, the story that the grease on the cap of the new cartridge was extracted from the fat of cows and pigs was readily accepted. The sepoys, both Hindu and Muslim, felt that the time had come for them to make a choice: they could either throw up their job and serve their gods or stick to them and serve the English.

The sepoys had many other grievances. Their pay was low. The highest rank they could attain was that of a subedar at Rs 60–70 per month; for the equivalent rank, an Englishman drew ten times more.[7] At the time of enlistment, sepoys were given assurances that they would not be called upon to go overseas. Nevertheless attempts were made to send them to Java and Burma. An example that defiance could pay dividends was set by English officers themselves who, when Lord Bentinck ordered reductions in their pay, threatened mutiny. If the *sāhib log* could defy their own *sircār*, why not the natives?

All classes of Indians—princes, merchants, the intelligentsia, peasants, and workers—who had come into contact with the white man had at one time or other been slighted by him. Terms such as nigger and *suar* (pig) had become common in the vocabulary of the Englishman, the country-born Anglo-Indian, and the half-caste Eurasian.

The proclamation of Prince Birjis Qadr of Oudh summed up the grievances: 'All Hindus and Mohammedans are aware that four things are dear to every man. First, religion; second honour; third, life; fourth, property. All these four things are safe under a native government.... The English have become enemies of the four things above named.'[8]

Sporadic acts of violence had taken place in different parts of the country since the autumn of 1856 and continued throughout the following winter and spring. But when the sepoys at Meerut murdered their white officers on the 10 May 1857 and proceeded

7 A retired English army officer wrote: 'The entire army of India amounts to 315,520 men costing £9,802,235. Out of this sum no less than £5,668,110 are expended on 51,316 European officers and soldiers.' *The Mutiny of the Bengal Army*, p. 25.

8 S. N. Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-seven*, p. 31.

to Delhi to proclaim Bahadur Shah emperor of Hindustan, news of the rising spread like wildfire and soon most of central and northern India stretching from Delhi to Bengal was in flames. Sepoys were joined by civilians in assaulting Europeans, their cantonments, homes, churches, and public institutions like post and telegraph offices. For some time the rising appeared to be a national revolt against a usurping foreigner. But very soon it became plain that there was little identity of purpose between the Muslim mutineers and the Hindu. The Muslims sought the restoration of Muslim rule; the Hindu hoped to put the Marathas back into power. The two communities were only united to the extent that they were fighting a common enemy, the English.

The Punjab on the Eve of the Mutiny

The situation in the Punjab was different from that which obtained in the rest of India. The Sikhs, who might well have gambled with the chance of recovering power, were leaderless: Maharajah Dalip Singh had renounced Sikhism and was assiduously trying to convert himself from a Punjabi prince into an English country gentleman; Sher Singh Attariwala was living under surveillance at Calcutta on a pension granted by the British;[9] Bhai Maharaj Singh and Raja Dina Nath (the only notable who spoke nostalgically of the old days) were dead;[10] Bedi Bikram Singh to whom the Sikhs looked for guidance as a descendant of Guru Nanak was interned in his village, Una.[11]

Sikh soldiers did not share the grievances of the Hindustani sepoys. They were allowed to wear turbans and beards and

9 Nevertheless, in August 1857, a police informer reported that some of the headmen of village Raja Jang were in treasonable correspondence with Sher Singh Attariwala. Punjab Government Records, *Mutiny Reports*, Vol. VIII, Part I, 247.

10 On 27 April, 1857, 'death had removed in Raja Deena Nath a palpable thorn in our side.' F. Cooper, *Crisis in the Punjab*, p. 20.

11 Punjab Government Records, *Mutiny Reports*, Vol. VIII, Part I, 273. There was some excitement among the Bedis of Dera Baba Nanak, but it did not lead to any disturbance. Ibid., p. 294.

observe the practices of the Khalsa. If they had any ill-will, it was towards the Hindustani sepoy (known to Punjabis contemptuously as *purabiah*—easterner—or by the one name *Mātā Dīn*), who disdained to mix with the Sikhs as men of low caste.[12]

The Punjab peasantry, including the Sikhs, was content because the harvest had been good[13] and the share demanded by the government as revenue was modest.

The Board of Administration and thereafter the chief commissioner, John Lawrence, had done a good job: they had brought peace to a land which had lived through ten years of chaos and bloodshed; they had regularized the legal system and both civil[14] and criminal courts were functioning smoothly; they had ruled with an iron hand but without offending the racial

12 'The animosity between the Sikhs and the Poorbeeahs is notorious, and the former gave out that they would not allow the latter to pass through their country. It was therefore determined to take advantage of this ill-feeling and to stimulate it by the offer of rewards for every Hindoostanee sepoy who should be captured.' Ibid., Vol. VIII. Part I, 234. 'The Khalsa held the Hindustanee in "supreme contempt and there was at least policy in reviving the term at this juncture, for it revived the contempt and hatred with which the class had ever been regarded; it widened the breach between the Punjabee and the Hindustanee, and rendered any coalition the more difficult."' Cave-Browne, *The Punjab and Delhi in 1857*, I, xvi.

'Hindustani' preponderance in the civil services was as overwhelming as in the army, for example, of the six Indian extra assistants in Lahore division, five were Poorabias. Punjab Government Records, *Mutiny Reports*, Vol. VIII, Part I, 227.

13 Ibid., Part II, 201.

'Providence had blessed the Punjab with a golden harvest, such as had not been known for many long years.' F. Cooper, *Crisis in the Punjab*, p. 27.

14 The institution of the Small Cause Court, with its cheap and expeditious disposal of civil suits, and the passing of a new Statute of Limitation in December 1856 reducing the period within which suits for bonded debts could be initiated from twelve to six years, brought a record number of suits for recovery of money. In the first four months of 1857. 45,953 suits were instituted; 'From one end of the Punjab to the other, the amount of litigation was great beyond example. The courts were thronged, thousands and thousands were intent on outwitting each other in forensic controversy.' *Punjab Administration Report, 1856–58*, para. 3.

or religious susceptibilities of the people;[15] they had introduced social reforms; they had laid roads, built schools, hospitals and rest houses in a land whose only experience of foreigners—Turks, Mongols, Pathans, Afghans, and Marathas—had been of systematic plundering.

When the mutiny broke out in Meerut on 10 May 1857, the army cantoned in the Punjab numbered about 60,000, of which considerably more than half were Hindustanis. The British soldiers numbered a mere 10,000.[16]

Hindustani sepoys in the Punjab were as thoroughly disaffected as other sepoys of the Company's army. In March and April, mysterious fires were reported in several cantonments, notably in those where sepoys were being trained in the use of the new Enfield rifle. In short, in the summer of 1857, the only people who could save the English in the Punjab from the wrath of the Hindustani sepoys, who outnumbered them by three to one, were the Punjabis.[17] And of the Punjabis, the one people who could be expected to turn a deaf ear to appeals to restore Mughal or Maratha rule were the Sikhs. The English fully exploited Sikh animosity towards Hindustani Hindus and Mussalmans.[18]

Disarming of the Sepoys and Suppression of the Mutiny in the Punjab

Since the uprising had not been planned, sepoy regiments in the Punjab knew nothing of what had transpired at Meerut and Delhi on the 10 and 11 May 1857. On the other hand, Montgomery (acting in the absence of John Lawrence) received full details

15 In June 1851, a Colonel Jiwan Singh was murdered by a drunken British soldier in Amritsar. Dalhousie refused to commute the sentence of death on the English soldier. This impressed the Punjabis, who had not expected the government to be impartial in a case in which a white man had done injury to an Indian.

16 Punjab Government Records, *Mutiny Reports*, Vol. VIII, Part II, 328.

17 Cave-Browne, *The Punjab and Delhi in 1857*, I, 41.

18 Punjab Government Records, *Mutiny Reports*, Vol. VIII, Part I, 234.

by telegraph of the uprising, the proclamation of Bahadur Shah, and the massacre of the English population of these cities. Montgomery called a meeting of the senior civil and military officers to consider the situation, and it was decided to deprive the sepoys at Mian Mir of their ammunition. On the morning of 13 May native regiments were compelled to pile arms.[19] On the same day, a council of war was held at Peshawar. General Reed assumed command in the Punjab and a movable column[20] was formed at Jhelum 'ready to move on every point in the Punjab where open mutiny required to be put down.'

John Lawrence, who was at Rawalpindi for the first two months of the mutiny, kept in constant touch with his subordinates. He considered it most important to recapture Delhi. For this purpose he suggested that the troops in the hills should march to Ambala, and he urged the commander-in-chief to free the Ambala force for action. To this end was his planning directed[21]— to disarm those troops whose loyalty was suspect, to raise new

19 SC 40 of 29.5.1857.

20 This proposal originated with Lt. Col. John Nicholson. Not only did the movable column put down mutiny (after the flight of the Jullundur mutineers) wherever it occurred but its services were also utilized in the disarming of native regiments.

21 'Trust the irregulars and the natives of the Punjab generally, but utterly distrust the regular army. Utilise the irregulars in every way you can. Bring them in from the frontier, where their work has been well done, to the points of danger in the interior of the country where they may have plenty of work of a novel kind. Add largely to the numbers of each existing regiment. Raise fresh regiments, as occasion may require, but do so under proper precautions, remembering that the weapon with which you are arming yourselves may, unless it is well wielded, be turned against yourselves. As for the regulars, watch them, isolate them, send them to detached frontier forts, where it will be difficult for them to act in concert. If any symptoms of mutiny show themselves, disarm them at once. If mutiny breaks forth into act, destroy them, if possible, on the spot; and if they take to flight, raise the native populations against them and hunt them down. A few stern examples at first will save much bloodshed in the end. Find out the Sikh chiefs living in your respective districts and enlist their martial instincts and their natural hatred of the Hindustanis on your side at once.' Substance of address by John Lawrence. Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, II, 42–3.

regiments and levies, and to release every available soldier from the Punjab to swell the ranks of the army marching to Delhi.

As these plans were shaping in Lawrence's mind, news came of the first outbreak in the Punjab at Ferozepur. Forewarned, the English officer-in-charge took steps to secure the magazine and successfully repulsed the mutineers' attack. At the same time the forts at Phillaur, Govindgarh, Kangra, Attock, and Multan were taken over; the sepoys' plan to make Phillaur a rallying point was thus frustrated.[22] The situation in Simla hill cantonments at Jutogh, Sabathu, Dagshai, and Kasauli caused anxiety. Gurkha regiments refused to obey their English officers, and those at Kasauli looted the treasury. Their demands were conceded, and they were prevailed upon to return to barracks.

As soon as news of the rising in Meerut and Delhi spread, 'a season of open violent crime'[23] set in the Cis-Sutlej states and in some towns of the Punjab, notably Ambala, Panipat, and Thanesar. Ranghar and Gujar tribes began to plunder in broad daylight.[24] Some zamindar princes of Hariana—the nawabs of Jhajjar and Dadree and the raja of Ballabhgarh—threw in their lot with the mutineers; the nawab of Loharu remained neutral. In eastern Punjab, although the Muslim chieftains—the nawabs of Karnal and Malerkotla—sided with the British, Muslim peasantry was sympathetic towards the mutineers. The Hindus remained indifferent. The people of the Trans-Sutlej were loyal to the British. With a few exceptions[25] the Sikhs of both the Cis-Sutlej and the Trans-Sutiej, princes and peasants, expressed unreserved support for the British. The rajas of Jind, Patiala, Nabha, Kalsia, and Kapurthala, the chiefs of Malaudh, Kheri,

22 Cave-Browne, *The Punjab and Delhi in 1857*, I, 120.

23 *Punjab Administration Report 1856–58*, para. 14.

24 'Every Gujar plundered as if he had been used to it all his life. Then began robberies in broad daylight in every thoroughfare, almost in every village. One village would turn out en masse to fight another.' Ibid.

25 'There was an abortive rising at Nalagarh and Rupar which was promptly suppressed. One Mohar Singh, a factor of the chief of Rupar, whose attempt to forbid the slaughter of kine had led to some disturbance was executed. Punjab Government Records, *Mutiny Reports*, Vol. VIII, Part I, 38–9.

Bhadaur, and Lodhran, the Singhpurias and the Sodhis of Kartarpur volunteered for service.

At the other end of the Punjab, the outbreaks at Naushera and Mardan[26] had put the authorities on their guard. The men at Peshawar were suspected of conspiring to strike during the Id festival; three native regiments were consequently disarmed. The sepoys at Mardan got wind of these moves, and some 500 fled to Swat,[27] where they offered their services to the wali.

John Lawrence ordered the Punjab to be sealed at either end. Troop concentrations were maintained on the north-west frontier to prevent Pathan tribes[28] and the volatile Dost Mohammed, amir of Afghanistan, from taking the opportunity to descend on the plains. Forces were posted at the south-eastern end in Hariana to prevent the mutineers from entering the Punjab and to apprehend those fleeing the province towards Delhi. In the Punjab itself, mobile columns of English and trustworthy Punjabis were ordered to round up deserters. Guards were placed on ferries, and high embankments were raised at points where rivers were fordable.

The flame of mutiny spread to Jullundur, where officers had been tardy in carrying out orders to disarm the native regiments. The mutineers made their way to Phillaur, where they were joined by the 3rd regiment of native infantry and then headed for Delhi.

26 Upwards of 100 Sikhs in the 55th regiment of native infantry volunteered to fight the rest of the regiment if led by their officers (SC 5 of 31.7.1857). Though this proposal went unheeded, it was later decided that Sikhs should be separated from the Hindustanis and together with Punjabi Mohammedans and hillmen should form the nucleus of new regiments.

27 Civil war had broken out in Swat the same day the mutiny broke out in Meerut. The wali was not well disposed towards the British.

28 'Peshawar once gone', said a trusty Sikh chief to the magistrate of Amritsar, 'the whole Punjab would roll up like this', and as he spoke he began slowly with his finger and thumb to roll up his robe from the corner of the hem towards its centre. 'You know on what a nest of devils we stand,' writes Edwardes to the chief commissioner, 'Once let us take our foot up, and we shall be stung to death.' And Edwardes and his companions had no intention of taking their foot up, but rather of putting it down and keeping it there.' Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, II, 63.

John Lawrence concluded that the disarming of suspected regiments and the escape of so many mutineers had adversely affected the loyalty of others. He decided to deprive the Hindustani sepoys of their arms irrespective of their past record wherever practicable. In pursuance of this policy, disarming took place in the Punjab cantonments including Multan and Phillaur. This was not effected smoothly in all cases. At Jhelum there was considerable bloodshed,[29] and some mutineers eluded their pursuers by escaping into Jammu. Two days after the Jhelum episode, the sepoys at Sialkot shot some of their officers and proceeded towards Delhi. Nicholson intercepted them near Trimmu Ghat on the Ravi. In the two encounters that followed nearly every one of the sepoys was either killed or drowned.

The disarmed regiments at Lahore became restive. Men of the 26th native infantry regiment suddenly attacked their officers and then headed northwards along the Ravi. They were ambushed by a posse of constabulary and armed villagers. One hundred and fifty were slain in this encounter. The main body, which took shelter on an island, was later attacked by a force led by F. Cooper, deputy commissioner of Amritsar. Fifty were drowned or shot while trying to swim away. The remaining (about 280) were captured and taken to the police station at Ajnala village. Cooper had 237 men shot in batches of tens; others refused to come out of the dungeon into which they had been thrown. Cooper left them there for the night. The next morning 45 were found to have died of suffocation.[30]

29 180 were killed in two days of fighting; 116 were captured and executed. Cooper, *The Crisis in the Punjab*, p. 128.

30 'The doors were opened and behold! They were nearly all dead! Unconsciously, the tragedy of Holwell's Black Hole had been re-enacted, No cries had been heard during the night, in consequence of the hubbub, tumult and shouting of the crowds of horsemen, police, tehseel guards, and excited villagers. 45 bodies, dead from fright, exhaustion, fatigue, heat and partial suffocation, were dragged into light, and consigned, in common with all the other bodies, into one common pit, by the hands of the village sweepers.' F. Cooper, *The Crisis in the Punjab*, pp. 162–3.

Another 42 captured subsequently were blown away from cannons.[31]

A similar tragedy was enacted on the north-west frontier. In the last week of August, sepoys of a disarmed regiment at Peshawar assaulted soldiers searching barracks for illicit arms. Fifty mutineers were shot; others who fled were chased and killed.[32] The barracks of the regiment were levelled by commissariat elephants.

The speed with which disaffected regiments were disarmed and the summary 'justice' meted out to those whose loyalty was suspect spread terror and obviated all chances of rebellion spreading in the Punjab. The stock of the sircār rose: in bazaar parlance, the price of 'pearls', 'white sugar' and 'red chillies' (symbolic of the English) went up, while that of 'red wheat', 'brown *gur*' (molasses), and 'black pepper' fell.

31 Cooper explained the crime of the mutineers to the public who, according to him, 'marvelled at the clemency and the justice of the British' for not killing the rabble of men, women, and children who had joined the mutineers. Cooper, *The Crisis in the Punjab*, p. 163.

Cooper's acts were commended by Lawrence and Montgomery. 'I congratulate you on your success against the 26th N.I. You and your police acted with much energy and spirit, and deserve well of the state. I trust, the fate of these sepoys will operate as a warning to others. Every effort should be exerted to glean up all who are at large.

'Roberts will no doubt leave the distribution of the rewards mainly to you. Pray see that they are allotted with due regard to merit, and that every one gets what is intended for him.' (Demi-official letter from Sir John Lawrence dated Lahore, 2 August 1857.)

32 Edwardes wrote: 'Almost all the 51st Native Infantry have been picked up and shot. More than seven hundred have been already killed. Four or five got to Khuddum in the Khyber, where the Hurikheyl said they would let them go to Kabul as Mussulmans, but not as Hindus; so they were converted on the spot.' Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, II, 179.

Cooper's account of the hunt of the 51st (which numbered 671 men) is graphic. 'Standing crops were beaten up, ravines probed, as if for pheasants and hares, and with great success...total [killed] within about 30 hours after the mutiny, no less than 659.' F. Cooper, *The Crisis in the Punjab*, p. 177.

Except for the incidents narrated above (and an uprising of the Muslim Kharal tribes around Gugiara district in September 1857) the Punjab was not affected by the rebellion which convulsed the rest of northern India. Punjabi Mussalmans turned a deaf ear to their Hindustani co-religionists' exhortation to jihād against the pig-eating despoilers of Islam. Punjabi Hindus and, with greater reason, the Sikhs refused to listen to the belated appeal to save Hindu dharma from beef-eating foreigners who used cow fat to grease their cartridges. This was not surprising because those, who in the summer of 1857 claimed to be crusaders for freedom, were the very people who eight years earlier had been the feringhees' instruments in reducing the Punjabis to servitude.

The loyalty of the Punjabi princes and rich zamindars was decisive in saving the Punjab and the rest of India for the British. They helped to maintain order in the Punjab, kept the roads leading to Delhi open for movement of troops, armour, and treasuries, and supplied money, men, and munitions.

Of the Punjabis, the role of the Sikhs in suppressing the uprising was the most significant. Sikh soldiers defended English establishments and families in Allahabad, Benares,[33] Lucknow, Kanpur, Arrah, and other centres of revolt. Since the Meerut and Delhi mutineers had proclaimed the restoration of Mughal rule, Sikhs who had been brought up on tales of Mughal atrocities against their forefathers reacted sharply to Bahadur Shah's proclamation. The British exploited the anti-Mughal sentiment of the Sikhs. A new version of the sau sākhī prophesying a joint Anglo-Sikh conquest of Delhi was circulated. Thus the prospect of loot was given the sanction of prophecy; the Sikhs eagerly joined the Company's forces marching towards Delhi.[34]

33 There were stray cases of Sikhs joining the mutineers. In Benares, a battalion of 'Ludhiana Sikhs' of the 37th native infantry mutinied on 3 June 1857. Many were killed or hanged. This triggered off a mutiny at Jewanpur, 70 miles from Benares. The Sikhs guarding the courthouse and treasury at Benares remained loyal. Hilton, *The Indian Mutiny*, pp. 73–5.

34 At first John Lawrence mistrusted the Khalsa. In a note dated 18 May 1857, he wrote: 'I do not like to raise large bodies of old Sikhs. I recollect

Sikh soldiers were in the van of the assault on Delhi, and, when the city capitulated on 20 September 1857, they were allowed to help themselves to whatever they could lay their hands on. Hodson with his Sikh horsemen first captured Bahadur Shah, Begum Zeenat Mahal, and their son Jawan Bakht. A day later they arrested two other sons and a grandson of the emperor. In the security provided by his Sikhs, Hodson ignored the presence of an armed mob of several thousand, stripped the three princes naked and shot them with his carbine. Sikhs took the corpses of the princes to Chandni Chowk and laid them out for display in front of Gurdwara Sis Ganj, where 182 years earlier their guru, Tegh Bahadur, had been executed by the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb. The 'prophecy' of the English version of sau sākhī was thus fulfilled in ample measure.

The Sikhs were handsomely rewarded for their services: the princes with grants of territory and palatial residences;[35] commoners with loot and employment opportunities.

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their strong nationality, how completely they were demoralised for some twelve years before annexation, and how much they have to gain by our ruin. I will not therefore consent to raise levies of the old Sikhs. There is a strong feeling of sympathy between Sikhs and Hindus, and though I am willing to raise Sikhs gradually and carefully, I wish to see them mixed with Mohammedans and hillmen.' Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, II, 53.

Gradually John Lawrence came round to the view that either the Sikhs would have to be fully trusted or treated as rebels; the Sikhs' readiness to enlist helped him to resolve his doubts.

Sikh soldiers who were disarmed along with their Hindustani compatriots at Mian Mir had, on protestations of loyalty, been separated and reformed into purely Sikh regiments. Sikhs belonging to regiments quartered south of Ambala, who were on leave in their homes in Majha, were asked to report at Lahore and were made the nuclei of new units. Cave-Browne, *The Punjab and Delhi in 1857*, I, 228. John Lawrence invited retired gunners of the Durbar army to rejoin colours—which they did with alacrity (Ibid., p. 296). Sappers and miners were raised from Mazhabi labourers working on roads and canals.

35 The princes were given additional territory, titles, and property. Patiala was rewarded with Narnaul division of Jhajjar, jurisdiction over Bhadaur, and a house belonging to Begum Zeenat Mahal in Delhi; FC 188 of 2.7.1858. Jind was given Dadree, 13 villages in Kooleran Pargana, and

Sikh Recruitment in the British Army

An important outcome of the mutiny, as far as the Sikhs were concerned, was that service in the armed forces was thrown open to them, and they became the most sought-after recruits for the British army. It is worthwhile recapitulating the steps by which this came about.

At the end of the first Sikh war in 1846, an irregular[36] force was raised out of the disbanded troops of the Durbar army. At the end of the second Anglo-Sikh war, this force was increased in strength and transferred to the north-west frontier; it came to be known as the Punjab Irregular Force and later the Punjab Frontier Force—the famous Piffers. In 1849, Dalhousie decided to take a few real Khalsas[37] into the British army.

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a house of Prince Abu Bakr in Delhi; FC 189 of 2.7.1858. Nabha was rewarded with the divisions of Bawal and Kanti in Jhajjar; FC 190 of 2.7.1858.

The transfer of Jhajjar's territories was calculated. A semi-official document explains the motives: 'The territories granted at the suggestion of the chief commissioner of the Punjab have been most judiciously selected from the Jhujjur district. By giving the Maharajah of Puttiala a *locus standi* in that portion of the country, a friendly Hindoo power is placed in the midst of a turbulent Mohammedan population, and a barrier is interposed towards the independent states of Ulwur and Jeypoor with its feudatories of Shekawattee and Ketru, the population of which proved themselves unfriendly during the late crisis. To protect the Jhujjur border would require a strong frontier police, backed by a large military force, and this task will now be undertaken by Puttiala. The divisions of Bhawul and Kantee, granted to the Nabha Rajah, are adjacent to that of Narnoul granted to the Maharajah of Puttiala; and thus we have two staunch adherents on the border of our territories on whom we can place strict reliance.' Cave-Browne, *The Punjab and Delhi in 1857*, II, 243.

The chieftains and jagirdars of districts Ambala and Thanesar were rewarded with remission of dues and with titles.

36 The term 'irregular' as opposed to 'regular' was applied to units raised for rough and ready local work with Indians holding fairly senior posts and a few selected British officers in command. They were specially trained for guerilla warfare.

37 It should be borne in mind that although the term 'Sikh' was used for the re-employed Durbar units, few were in fact Sikhs; they were largely Punjabi Mussalmans, Gurkhas, and Hindustanis of the Durbar army.

Although the number was very small, he was criticized for this action.[38]

The question of Sikh recruitment was considered by the governor general, the commander-in-chief, and the Board of Administration. Brigadier Hodgson, who had commanded the Sikh corps, drew up a memo on the subject which, after its approval, became a sort of magna carta for Sikh recruitment. It provided that the number of the Punjabis to be enlisted in the regular army should be limited for the time being to 200 per regiment of whom only half were to be Sikh, making the total number of Sikhs in the 74 regiments 7400. Recruits were to be under 20 years of age—thus the old Khalsa of the Durbar army were debarred. To make soldiering an honourable profession, only Jat Sikhs were enlisted; Sikhs of lower castes such as Mazhabis, Ramdasias, etc. were rigorously excluded. The most important decision taken, and one which had a far-reaching effect in preserving the separate identity of the Sikhs, was to assure the Sikhs who joined the army that the traditions of the Khalsa would not be interfered with. The regulation provided that:

'The paol, or religious pledges of Sikh fraternity, should on no account be interfered with. The Sikh should be permitted to wear his beard, and the hair of his head gathered up, as enjoined by his religion. Any invasion, however slight, of these obligations would be construed into a desire to subvert his faith, lead to evil consequences, and naturally inspire general distrust and alarm. Even those, who have assumed the outward conventional characteristics of Sikhs should not be permitted after entering the British army, to drop them.'[39]

38 Baird, *Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie*, pp. 84–5.

39 SC 38 of 28.2.1851. Lord Dalhousie gave his assent to these regulations and remarked, 'Soon after I entered the Punjab during the present march, I heard that Sikhs had been enlisted, but that, in compliance I presume with existing regulations, they had been required to cut off their beards—an act to which no real Sikh can submit; or if he for a time submits to it of necessity, it is impossible that he can do so without the

Discrimination against the Mazhabi was felt to be invidious[40] as he was as good a fighter as the Jat. A beginning was made when they were recruited as labourers to build roads in mountains infested with hostile Pathan tribesmen; they also dug the Bari Doab Canal. The Mazhabis were treated as *matī-men* (earth workers) and given neither uniform nor arms. Their promotion to regular soldiering came with the mutiny.

Sikh soldiers proved their fighting quality and loyalty in the Anglo-Burmese war of 1852[41] and two years later against the Mohmand tribe on the north-west frontier.[42] Consequently when the mutiny broke out the English officers were assured that Sikhs would not make common cause with the mutineers, and they selected them to replace the disbanded Poorabiah. At the same time, the Mazhabis were elevated from gangs of labourers to a corps of Pioneers.[43]

Early in May 1857, Hodson raised a unit of horse and foot to work with the military intelligence department and keep the road between Karnal and Meerut open. Hodson borrowed his first 100 Sikhs from the raja of Jind. He then raised three *risālāhs* (cavalry) from the disbanded *ghoṛcaṛāhs* of the old Durbar army. This was the origin of what later became famous as Hodson's Horse.[44] Other English officers raised irregular forces of their own. The names of Brasyer, Rothney, and Rattray came to be attached to Sikh units.

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deepest discontent.... No true Sikh will submit to it—and the intelligence that such a regulation is enforced, rapidly spreading among the other Sikh corps in the service, may produce alarm or at best restlessness which is much to be deprecated. This point, therefore, should at once be set at rest.' SC 39 of 28.2.1851.

40 SC 44 of 28.2.1851.

41 Baird, *Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie*, pp. 200–1.

42 Ibid., p. 321.

43 The credit for the recruitment of Mazhabis goes to Robert Montgomery, the judicial commissioner. MacMunn, *The History of the Sikh Pioneers*, pp. 20–2.

44 Because of their red turbans and kummerbunds on their khaki uniforms, Hodson's Horse came to be known as 'The Flamingoes'.

Reviewing the course of events, British army officers after consulting the maharajahs of Patiala, Jind,[45] and Nabha decided 'to trust to no race in particular... and to mix races in our native army as far as practicable.'[46] The Sikhs were, however, handsomely complimented for their role in suppressing the mutiny.[47]

In 1858 a commission under General Peel was appointed to explore the subject of reorganization of the Indian army. It recommended that the proportion of native to English troops should be fixed at two to one and that no natives should be taken into the artillery. The recommendations were accepted and put into effect straightaway. In two years, the native army was reduced to 140,500 (75,300 Europeans) and by 1869 further reduced to 122,000 (62,000 Europeans). The ethnic change in the constitution of the native army was given permanence by Lord Roberts (commander-in-chief, 1885–93). Some races including the Sikhs, Gurkhas, Dogras, Rajputs, and Punjabi Mussalmans were recognized as 'martial'; others including the Poorabiah, who had won most of the Englishman's battles in India, were declared 'non-martial' and unfit for military service. Of the martial races the favourites of English officers were the Sikhs and Gurkhas.

Administrative Changes—India and the Punjab

After the mutiny, the Court of Directors of the East India Company was abolished and its powers transferred to Parliament. The Parliament appointed a secretary of state and entrusted him and the governor general with the administration of India.

45 Patiala advised against raising the proportion of Punjabis to more than one-third of the whole of the native soldiery; Jind went further stating that—'the race [Sikhs] is not entirely trustworthy'. SC I and 2 of 29.10.1858.

46 SC 1 of 29.10.1858.

47 'The Sikhs were raised at a most critical season when other recruiting grounds were in the hands of the mutineers or in a state of rebellion. They were called out to save the Empire and have fulfilled their mission, and we all owe our warmest thanks to that bold and sagacious policy which called them into the field and which, I am sure, will also devise means for keeping them under command for the future.' SC 2 of 29.10.1858.

The most important administrative change as far as the Punjab was concerned was the adhesion of Hariana and Delhi to the province. The new districts were inhabited by a people who did not speak Punjabi nor have the Punjabi's spirit of enterprise. Their way of life and their values were as different from those of the Punjabis as their economy. Most of Hariana was a desert woefully deficient in food. And Delhi was a commercial city with little in common with pastoral Punjab. This misalliance created difficulties for subsequent governments.

The status of the administrative head of the Punjab was raised from chief commissioner to lieutenant governor. John Lawrence occupied the post for a month. He was succeeded by Robert Montgomery.

By the Indian Councils Act of 1861, the number of Indians on the governor general's council was increased. The services rendered by the Sikhs in the mutiny were recognized by the nomination of the maharajah of Patiala to this council.

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7. Crescat E Fluviis[1]

After the mutiny, the government resumed the work of reclaiming the desert and opening up the country by a network of roads and rail lines. The Hasli Canal was extended. The Ravi was tapped from the place it entered the plains, and a canal was dug which, after traversing the districts of Amritsar and Lahore, fell back into the parent stream above Multan. This was accomplished in 1861 and came to be known as the Upper Bari Doab Canal.

Ten years later the waters of the Jumna were similarly canalized. The Western Jumna Canal watered the southern districts of Ambala, Karnal, Hissar, and Rohtak.

In the years 1886–8 an attempt was made to reclaim the desert surrounding Multan. Water was taken from the Sutlej, and 177,000 acres of barren land were brought under the plough. The experiment was not a success as the canals could not guarantee a perennial flow of water. The mistakes made in Multan were turned to profit by both engineers and colonizers when four years later (1892) over a million acres were irrigated with the waters of the Chenab.[2]

The success of the Chenab Colony was followed by the equally successful irrigation of the Shahpur Thal desert (in 1892 and 1897) by the waters of the Jhelum.

1 'Strength from the waters'—the motto of the Punjab.

2 In 1922 the Lower Chenab Canal irrigated 2½ million acres of land M. Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, p. 150.

The most daring of all irrigation schemes was the Triple Project, begun in 1905 and completed twelve years later. This project was chiefly designed to bring water to Montgomery (the district named after Sir Robert). Since the Ravi, which ran through the district, had already been tapped by the Upper Bari Doab Canal and had no more water to spare, the plan was to feed the Ravi with the waters of the Jhelum and the Chenab and then 'milk' it for Montgomery. The Upper Jhelum Canal took the waters of the Jhelum and, after irrigating 350,000 acres of the Chaj Doab, fell into the Chenab. The Upper Chenab Canal then took off from the Chenab and, after irrigating 650,000 acres of the Rechna Doab in the districts of Gujranwala and Sheikhupura, joined the Ravi, where a 'level crossing' of a 550-yard barrage helped the water to cross to the other side. The third of the Triple Project canals, the Lower Bari Doab, then took off, ran 134 miles through Montgomery into Multan and back into the Ravi.[3]

The digging of these canals was accompanied by a massive rehabilitation of the desert lands. Till then the doabs had been scenes of 'unparalleled desolation...miles of dry and barren waste, dotted with sparse scrub jungle and stunted trees, but devoid of any whisper of life'.[4] The indigenous inhabitants of these intrafluvial mesopotamias—the cattle-stealing nomads—were compelled to settle in villages and direct their energies to lawful occupations.

The area specifically chosen for the Sikhs was a tract known as *nīlī bār*, irrigated by the Chenab Canal.[5] Colonization officers

3 The Triple Project was designed by Sir John Benton.

4 Paper by Sir J. Douie, 7 May 1914, Royal Society of Arts, London. An anecdote current at the time was that the lieutenant governor and his senior officers were visiting one of the *bars* and were doubtful whether farmers could be persuaded to settle on the inhospitable land even if canals were laid out. They consulted an old Punjabi farmer who replied: 'Sirs, I see no flies here. But if you put some sugar here, you will soon have flies and if you put water on the land you will not lack colonists.'

5 From the Chenab were taken 427 miles of canal, 2280 miles of distributory channels, and 12,000 miles of water course. These cultivated 2½ million acres of land. The total outlay was 26 million rupees. The revenue yield was 34 per cent of the capital. The yearly value of the irrigated crop was more than 78 million rupees, that is, three times the cost of the canal.

scoured Sikh villages in the districts of Amritsar, Ludhiana, and Ferozepur to pick up the best farmers. The colonists were divided into three categories. At the bottom were common peasants, who were granted between 14 to 16 acres free of cost. The next grade were yeomen, who were given 111 to 139 acres on payment of a nazrana of Rs 6 to 9 per acre. On top came the 'capitalists' with 167 to 556 acres who had to pay Rs 10 to 20 per acre. The settlers were given 'heritable and inalienable rights of occupancy'. The vast majority of the Sikh colonists were Malwa Jats with a sprinkling of non-Jat agriculturist tribes—Kambohs, Labanas, and Mazhabis.

The colonists got to work with great zeal. What had been a great expanse of yellow sand became within a couple of years a flourishing country of cornfields and villages.[6] Special grants were made to set up 'remount depots' (stud farms for horses and mules for the army) and later for select breeds of cattle.

The production from the new lands was far in excess of the requirements of the province, and the first harvest rotted in storehouses. The building of railways and feeder roads was speeded up. In 1861 a beginning had been made by linking Lahore and Amritsar by rail. In the next thirty years a criss-cross of rail lines was laid across the province connecting the canal colonies with the cities of India. Wheat, cotton,[7] and oilseeds

6 The financial commissioner's review claimed: 'Cultivation has now become more careful; comfortable and commodious houses have been built; all villages have now a good well, many of them have a mosque or a dharamsala and a rest house; the growth of good shade-giving trees is remarkable, both in villages and fields. Many villages are a pattern of cleanliness and comfort, and the people evidently take pride in them and their imposing houses of brick and mortar. There are of course, some exceptions among 100,000 colonists, but the general impression is one of great prosperity, comfort and content, from which a feeling of gratitude to government for the extraordinary benefits its colonization scheme has conferred on these fortunate individuals in the short space of fifteen years is not absent.' *Civil and Military Gazette*, 26 May 1909.

7 The first attempt to erect a cotton mill in the Punjab was made in March 1883, when citizens of Lahore met under the chairmanship of Raja Harbans Singh to consider the matter. *Tribune*, 18 March 1883.

from the Punjab were taken by rail to Bombay and Karachi to be exported: the export of wheat alone reached over a million tons a year. The price of land, which at the time of annexation had been only Rs 10 an acre, rose to over Rs 400 per acre in the new colonies.[8] The Punjabis became the most prosperous peasantry of India; and, of the Punjabis, the Sikhs became the most prosperous of all.

The prosperity ushered in by the development of the canal colonies and the preference shown towards the Sikhs in recruitment to the imperial army had an important bearing on the future and the caste complex of the community. The economic advantages of being Sikh checked the disintegration of Sikhism and its lapse into Hinduism. On the contrary, the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th, saw a phenomenal rise in the numbers of Sikhs.[9] This was due largely to the patronage of the government, which required posts reserved for Sikhs in the army (and later in the civilian services) to be filled exclusively by the *kesādhārī* Khalsa. This patronage paved the way for the success of the proselytization movement, the Singh Sabha (discussed in Chapter 9). Thus the gloomy foreboding of Lord Dalhousie[10] of the possibility of the disappearance of the Sikhs was staved off by policies initiated by Dalhousie himself and supplemented by army commanders and administrators of the Punjab.

The proportion of Sikhs in the imperial army was considerably more than that warranted by their numbers. Of the total strength from the Punjab of 42,560 at the turn of the century, 20,060 were Muslims, 11,612 Hindus, and 10,867 Sikhs.[11] (There were another 4122 Sikhs in the armies of the Punjab states.) In other words, the Sikhs, who formed only a little more than 12 per cent of the population of the Punjab, constituted about 25 per cent of its army. Of the Sikh soldiery, the largest number were Jats

8 H. Calvert, *The Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab*, p. 219.

9 See footnote on p. 146.

10 See p. 96.

11 P. H. Kaul, *Census of India, 1911*, Vol. xiv, Punjab, Part II, Tables, pp. 438–9.

(6666 in the imperial army; 1845 in the armies of native states). The Mazhabis came next with 1626. Preference for Jats stabilized their position at the top of the caste hierarchy among the Sikhs. This upward mobility of Sikh Jats (considered as sudras, the lowest of the four castes of Hindus) had begun in the time of Guru Gobind Singh, when a large majority of those baptized were Jats. It was the baptized kesādhārī Jats who had been the chief instruments of the Sikh rise to power and consequently became the land-owning aristocracy during the rule of Maharajah Ranjit Singh. Under British rule, Jats maintained their position as the premier caste among the Sikhs—superior to the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas (from whom the gurus had sprung), and the Vaishyas. This position was not achieved by Muslim or Hindu Jats in their respective communities.

A similar upward mobility was evident with respect to the Mazhabi and Ranghreta Sikhs—and for the same reason, viz. recruitment in the army and the acquisition of land.[12] Apart from tradition, the real cause of the denigration of these castes was their occupation as scavengers (*cuhrās*) or skinners of carrion (*camārs*). With new avenues of employment, many belonging to these castes abandoned their hereditary callings to become soldiers or farmers—and began to lay claim to equal status with other soldiers and farmers. Although they did not wholly succeed in erasing the stigma of low caste, they did succeed in winning a better place in Sikh society than untouchables who remained Hindus or Muslims.

12 For a detailed analysis of the caste structure among the Sikhs with special reference to the upward mobility of the Jats and the untouchable castes see Marenco, *Caste and Class among the Sikhs of North West India.*

PART III

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS REFORM

The climate of the Orient has always been productive of messiahs and prophets. Every age has had its quota of men claiming kinship or communion with God; some even professing to be His human reincarnations.

The Sikhs have had their share of messiahs; the messianic pattern was, however, Sikh-oriented. The gurus had assured their disciples that no one could attain salvation without the mediation of a teacher. Consequently Gobind Singh's declaration that the line of human gurus was at an end and thereafter the Sikhs should look for guidance to the Ādi Granth was ignored by many of the succeeding generations; and the sau sākhī was forged to sanctify pretensions of prophethood.

The first two sects dealt with in the following pages were born out of the changing fortunes of the Sikhs: out of their rise from rustic poverty to sovereign opulence; and then out of their reduction to a subject people under an alien race. In the first phase, power produced wealth and wealth irreligiousness; in the second phase, the loss of power roused passion to recreate the golden age that had passed. The Nirankaris and the Namdharis exemplify these themes.

The Radha Soamis stand apart as a non-denominational group born of the impact of Sikhism (minus the Khalsa tradition) on Hinduism. It illustrates the sort of mélange of Hinduism and Sikhism which is gaining currency in educated circles of both communities.

More important than the three sects mentioned above was the religious-cum-social movement which went under the name Singh Sabha. On the religious plane, it remained true to the orthodox tradition of 'no guru save the Granth'; on the social, it met the challenge of modern times with modern weapons.

The first task was to adapt the Sikhs to the post-annexation situation. The annexation had reduced the Sikhs from a position of dominance to one of subservience not only to the British but also to the Muslims and the Hindus, who considerably outnumbered them. This sense of numerical inferiority was accentuated by the fact that, while the annexation brought the Punjab Muslims and Hindus into direct contact with their more enlightened Indian co-religionists, the Sikhs of the annexed territories were only reunited to their Malwai brethren, who were even less educated than themselves. The Sikhs had no option but to turn to their rulers for guidance. Under the auspices of the Singh Sabha, the Sikhs sought and won the collaboration of English officials in their drive for literacy.

The second task was to preserve their identity. The annexation exposed the dispirited and leaderless Sikh masses to the preaching of Christian missionaries and the proselytizing activities of the Hindu Arya Samajists. The Singh Sabha met this challenge by reviving interest in Sikh religion and tradition.

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8. Religious Movements

The Nirankaris

During the reign of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, the Hindus of western Punjab and Derajat came under the influence of Sikhism. A few accepted the *pahul* and joined the Khalsa fraternity; most others continued to describe themselves as Hindus but gave up the worship of Hindu gods and the recitation of the Vedas, instead reading the Granth and joining Sikh congregations at the gurdwaras. Among these Hindus there grew a custom of bringing up at least one son as a kesādhārī Sikh. This half-Hindu, half-Sikh community belonged to the Khatri, Arora, or Bania castes. They continued to marry within their castes regardless of the change in their religious beliefs.

Dyal Das (d.1855), a bullion merchant of Peshawar, belonged to this Hindu-Sikh community. He condemned idol worship and making obeisance to 'holy' men; he disapproved of going on pilgrimages and performing Brahmanical ritual. The positive aspect of his teaching was that God was formless—*niraṅkār* (hence the futility of worshipping idols or 'saints'); consequently he described himself as a *niraṅkārī*. He coined the phrase:

dhan niraṅkār
deh dhārī sab khwār

Praise be to the Formless Creator;
Worship of mortals is of no avail.

Dyal Das soon acquired the status of a guru and gathered around him disciples who, like him, described themselves as Nirankaris. They ran into opposition first from Hindu Brahmins and, after Dyal Das moved from Peshawar to Rawalpindi, from the Bedi descendants of Guru Nanak, who had a large following in the district. The Nirankaris were ostracized by both the Hindus and the Sikhs and had to build their own places of worship. The biggest was raised on the banks of the stream Layee four miles outside Rawalpindi. When Dyal Das died, his sandals became an object of veneration. They were placed on an altar alongside the Granth, and the temple on the Layee was named after him as Dayalsar. It became the headquarters of the Nirankari sect.

Dyal Das was succeeded by the eldest of his three sons, Darbara Singh. Darbara Singh built new centres (*bīṛās*) for the Nirankaris and began the practice of issuing encyclicals (*hukumnāmās*) for the instruction of his followers. His chief contribution was to standardize rituals connected with births, marriages,[1] and deaths. These rituals were a departure from the Hindu tradition inasmuch as they were based on the Granth and not on the Hindu sacred texts. Darbara Singh (d.1870) was succeeded by his youngest brother, Rattan Chand (d.1909), and Rattan Chand by his son Gurdit Singh (d.1947). The present head of the Nirankaris is Gurdit Singh's son, Hara Singh.

Various estimates of the numbers of the sect have been made.[2] The Nirankaris themselves claim a following of nearly 100,000 comprised mainly of non-Jat Sikhs and Hindus of the Arora Zargar (goldsmith) and Kshatriya castes.[3] Until 1947, their influence was restricted to Sikh and Hindu communities

1 The Nirankaris claim that they were the first to introduce the Anand marriage which is performed by circumambulating the Granth. The Anand Marriage Act legalizing such marriages was passed in 1909.

2 The census of 1891 records the number of Nirankaris as 50,724, of which 11,817 were Sikhs and 38,907 Hindus. Captain A. H. Bingley in his *Handbook for the Indian Army* estimates the total figure of Nirankaris at 38,000.

3 Information supplied by Dr Man Singh, son of the Nirankari guru.

of the North-West Frontier Province and Kashmir. After the partition of India, Dayalsar was abandoned, and the centre was shifted first to Amritsar and then to Chandigarh, the new capital of east Punjab.

The differences between orthodox Sikhism and the Nirankaris are limited to the latter's worship of gurus other than the ten recognized by the Sikhs. Nirankaris style Dyal Das and his successors with honorifics such as *srī satgurū* (the true guru) and *srī hazūr sāhib* (his holy eminence). They also disapprove of the militant Khalsa.[4] The Nirankaris are fast losing their separate identity and may, within a few decades, merge back into the Hindu or Sikh parent body. The importance of the movement lies largely in the fact that it initiated ceremonial rites which inculcated among the Sikhs a sense of separateness and thus checked the process of their absorption into Hinduism.

Radha Soamis of Beas

The founder of the Radha Soami sect was a Hindu banker, Shiv Dayal (1818–78), of Agra. Shiv Dayal was greatly influenced by the teachings of the Ādi Granth, and he propounded a doctrine which contained elements of both Hinduism and Sikhism. He described God as the union between *radha* (symbolizing the soul) and *Soāmī*, the Master; hence himself as a worshipper of

4 Two of the four Nirankari gurus were not baptized as Khalsa, and Nirankaris substitute the word '*niraṅkār*' for '*srī bhagwatī*' (the sword) in the invocation recited at the end of prayer because, say the Nirankaris, *bhagwatī* is also the name of a Hindu goddess. The only other point of difference from orthodox Sikhs is in their form of greeting, which is *dhan niraṅkār* instead of the orthodox *sat srī akāl*.

5 Shiv Dayal's beliefs are set out in his book *Sār Bacan* (Essential Utterances) and can be briefly summarized as follows:

Human beings, who are the highest of God's creation, are afflicted with sorrow because they have been unable to achieve the perfection of which they are capable; such perfection can only be attained under the guidance of a guru who can give *diksā*—the secret formula—consisting of instructions in physical and mental discipline to achieve *samādhī* (meditation). The

Radha Soāmī.[5] Shiv Dayal attracted a following of Hindus and Sikhs and became the first guru of the sect. On his death, the Radha Soamis split into two: the main centre was at Agra;[6] a branch started by a Sikh disciple, Jaimal Singh[7] (1839–1913), was on the bank of river Beas, not very far from Amritsar.

The Beas Radha Soamis soon became independent of the Agra centre and had a succession of gurus—all Sikhs—of their own. On Jaimal Singh's death, one of his disciples, Sawan Singh Grewal, an engineer, became the head of the Punjab Radha Soamis. Sawan Singh enlarged the Beas centre and named it Dera Baba Jaimal Singh. During Sawan Singh's tenure, the number of Beas Radha Soamis increased rapidly. Besides Sikhs, who formed the nucleus, they included Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, and Christians. Sawan Singh (d.1948) was succeeded by Jagat Singh, a retired professor of agriculture. After a short term of three years, Jagat Singh (d.1951) nominated Charan Singh Grewal (a grandson of Sawan Singh) as his successor. Under

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human body is divided into two separate compartments: the higher which is above the eyes is the seat of the soul; and the baser which is below the eyes is controlled by the mind. Realization of God comes by reproducing the image of the guru at a spot between the eyes (*śiv netrā*) and repetition of *śabd* (the word) or *nām* (name of the Lord). This practice is known as the *sūrat śabd yoga*, or the union (*yoga*) of the soul (*sūrat*) with the sound current (*śabd*). The company of truthful people (*satsaṅg*) is essential. (The organization is known as the Radha Soami Satsang.)

6 Shiv Dayal died in 1878 and was succeeded at Agra by Rai Saligram Saheb Bahadur (1828–98). Rai Saligram composed religious verse of which two anthologies, *Prem Bānī* and *Prem Patr*, are the better known. He also wrote *An Exposition of the Radha Soami Doctrine* in English.

The third guru of the Agra Radha Soamis was a Bengali Brahmin, Brahma Sankar Misra (1861–1907). After Misra the Agra Radha Soamis broke up into different factions. Today they have a flourishing industrial estate in a suburb called Dayalbagh. The Agra centre is more of economic than religious importance.

7 Jaimal Singh was a Sikh Jat from village Ghuman (district Gurdaspur). He was a soldier in the forces of the East India Company and met Shiv Dayal while he was posted in Agra. On retirement from active service, he returned to the Punjab and set up a Radha Soami centre on the left bank of the Beas.

Charan Singh's leadership—he is an educated man with great charismatic charm—the Beas Radha Soamis have grown into a community of substantial proportions: over 100,000 followers assemble to celebrate the birthdays of their gurus. They claim the adherence of a million men and women of different nationalities and denominations.[8]

The Beas Radha Soamis have some basic differences with orthodox Sikhism. They believe in a living guru, who initiates[9] the disciples, who thereupon become *guru bhāīs* or *guru bahins* (brothers-in-faith or sisters-in-faith) and greet each other with the words 'radha soami'. Radha Soami temples do not have the Granth Sāhib but only a raised platform where the guru sits to deliver a discourse. They have no *kīrtan* because they believe that music diverts people's minds from the meaning of the hymns to the simple enjoyment of sound. And, although the Radha Soami gurus of Beas as well as their Sikh adherents remain kesādhārī, they do not believe in pahul (baptism) nor in the militant vows of the Khalsa.

Although the Radha Soamis owe much to Sikhism—their gurus' discourses are largely drawn from the Ādi Granth—it would be wrong to describe them as a sub-sect of Sikhism. The only justification for treating them along with other Sikh religious movements is their close resemblance to the *sahajdhārīs*. The sahajdhārīs nominally accept the teachings of all the ten gurus and keep up the fiction that in due course they will be baptized as the Khalsa. The Radha Soamis only accept the teachings of the first five gurus contained in the Adi Granth and reject the rest. The Radha Soamis present a new version of sahajdhārī Sikhism. Their faith has considerable attraction for the religiously-inclined educated classes, for the Hindu-oriented Sikh, and the Sikh-oriented Hindu.

8 It is impossible to verify the number as the Radha Soamis do not form a distinct and separate sect and are not therefore listed in the census.

9 Radha Soami initiation involves certain vows, for example, strict vegetarianism, abstinence from alcohol, and two and a half hours of meditation every day.

Namdhari or Kuka Movement

The Namdhari sect was founded by Balak Singh,[10] of village Hazro in the north-west frontier region. Balak Singh had been inspired by the sermons of one Jawahar Mal,[11] who preached the virtues of poverty and denounced the rich as godless. Balak Singh followed suit by exhorting his followers to live simply and practise no religious ritual other than repeating God's name or *nām* (hence *nāmdhārī*).[12] It was Balak Singh's personality more than the substance of his sermons that induced his followers to look upon him as a reincarnation of Guru Gobind Singh. Before Balak Singh died he chose one of his most ardent disciples, the carpenter Ram Singh,[13] as his successor. The headquarters of the Namdharis shifted from Hazro to Ram Singh's village Bhaini in Ludhiana district.

Ram Singh introduced some changes in the forms of worship, appearance, and form of address which distinguished his followers from the rest of the Sikhs. Following his example, his

10 Balak Singh (1797–1862) was the son of a goldsmith of village Sarvala (district Attock) who later shifted his business to Hazro. They were Aroras of the Batra sub-caste.

11 Jawahar Mal, known for his piety as *sāiṉ sāhib*, was the son of Dayal Chand, of village Sarai Saleh near Haripur. Dayal Chand, though a Vaishnavite Hindu, was strongly drawn to the simple tenets of the Sikh faith. He started to expound the Granth and drew large crowds to his centre. Dayal Chand came to be known as 'Bhagat,' and thereafter his descendants, who are of the Kalal caste, styled themselves as 'Bhagats'. In 1847 Jawahar Mal opened a centre for divine worship entitled the *Jagiāsī Abhiāsī Āśram.*

12 Namdharis were to rise at 3 a.m., brush their teeth, and bathe. They were ordered to live simply and thriftily. The destruction of female children was rigorously forbidden—so also was the giving or accepting of dowries. Namdharis were enjoined to live on their earnings and forbidden to beg for alms. Tobacco, snuff, and alcohol were taboo. Meat was also excluded from the diet of the Namdharis.

13 Ram Singh (1816–85) was a Ramgarhia of village Bhaini (Ludhiana district). He was in the Durbar's artillery and met Balak Singh when his unit was posted on the frontier. When Sikh artillery was disbanded after the first Anglo-Sikh war. Ram Singh came to live at Hazro. On the annexation of the Punjab, he returned to Bhaini and resumed his ancestral profession and the preaching of Balak Singh's message.

disciples chanted hymns and, like dancing dervishes, worked themselves into a state of frenzy and emitted loud shrieks (*kūks*): they came therefore to be named *Kūkās*. The Kukas wore only white handspun cloth; they bound their turbans in a style of their own (flat across the forehead instead of forming an angle); they wore necklaces of woollen rosaries; they carried staves in their hands; and they greeted each other with *sat akāl purakh* instead of the customary *sat srī akāl*. Although most of the Kukas came from the poorer classes of Ramgarhias, Jats, cobblers, and Mazhabis, Ram Singh made them feel as if they were the elect—the saintly *saṅt Khālsā*—while the others were *mlecha* (unclean). Ram Singh issued *hukumnāmās* to his followers which embraced ethical, social, hygienic, as well as political matters.[14]

Ram Singh's religious discourses began to have a political flavour. When he administered *pahul*, besides the usual sermon delivered on such occasions, Ram Singh spoke of the wickedness of the Sikh princes and landowners; of the assumption of guruship by the Bedi and Sodhi descendants of the gurus; of the wickedness of idolatry and casteism.[15] Despite his criticism of

14 *Ethical:* Do not lie, steal or commit adultery. *Personal:* Do not imbibe tobacco, alcohol or meat of any kind. Wear turbans flat across the forehead. *Social:* Do not destroy or trade in female children; do not give girls under eight in marriage; do not give or take large dowries (Ram Singh performed mass marriages of his followers in village Khote in 1863. He forbade his followers to spend more than Rs 13 at a wedding). Do not lend or borrow money on interest: Do not castrate bulls; protect cows and other animals from slaughter. *Hygienic:* Rise before dawn and bathe every day; (pray and tell beads of rosaries made of wool). *Political:* Do not accept service with government; do not send children to government schools; do not go to courts of law but settle disputes by reference to pañcāyats; do not use foreign goods; do not use government postal services.

15 'Gobind Singh's *Granth* is the only true one, written by imagination, and is the only sacred writing extant. Gobind Singh is the only true guru. Any person, irrespective of caste or religion, can be admitted a convert. He said Sodhis, Bedis, *mahaṅts*, Brahmins and such like are impostors, as none are gurus except Gobind Singh. Temples of Devi, Shiva, are a means of extortion, to be held in contempt and never visited. Idols and idol-worship are insulting to God, and will not be forgiven. Converts are allowed to read Gobind Singh's *Granth*, and no other book.' Mr Kinchant's description of the Kuka Articles of Belief, 1863. *Papers Relating to the Kuka Sect.*

many Hindu practices, Ram Singh became an ardent protector of the cow.

Ram Singh had separate gurdwaras built for his followers. He appointed *sūbās* (governors) who collected funds which were remitted to Bhaini. He arranged for the training of young men in the use of weapons and built up a paramilitary organization. The Kukas had their own postal runners to carry secret messages.

By 1863, Ram Singh had a well-knit following of several thousands. A new version of the sau sākhī was circulated. It prophesied the rebirth of Guru Gobind Singh in the person of one Ram Singh, carpenter of village Bhaini, who would resurrect the Khalsa, drive the English out of Hindustan, and establish a new Sikh dynasty. Ram Singh ordered his followers to assemble at Amritsar for the Baisakhi festival to listen to a special proclamation. The fact that this was exactly what Guru Gobind Singh had done at Anandpur when he baptized the Khalsa could not have been lost on the Kukas.

Ram Singh arrived in Amritsar and found the city bristling with police. He was unable to make his proclamation. On his return to Bhaini, he was served with a notice forbidding him to leave the village. He complained that he had been victimized by 'government bodies, Brahmins and many other people....'[16] Ram Singh remained under surveillance till the government had assured itself that the Kukas would cause no disturbance.

On the Dussehra festival in the autumn of 1867, Ram Singh visited Amritsar with nearly 3500 of his followers. He was received with honour at the Harimandir and other shrines and baptized over 2000 Sikhs, including members of some well-to-do families of zamindars. By this time Ram Singh had acquired, perhaps without any volition on his part, the status of secular chief. He travelled with a bodyguard of soldiers and, like a prince, held court every day. He exchanged presents with several ruling chiefs and sent a mission to Nepal.

16 Letter to Bhagat Jawahar Mal, October 1865, quoted by Ganda Singh, *Kūkiaṇ di Vithiā*, p. 59.

Kukas who had been fed on prophecies of a Sikh resurgence could not remain quiescent for too long. But when it came to making an issue, they fastened on a matter which barely touched the sentiments of the Sikh masses, viz. protection of cows. And on this issue too they chose to vent their spleen on Muslim butchers rather than on the English. Their collision with the authorities came as a result of their attempt to stop the slaughter of kine.

Kuka fanatics murdered some Muslim butchers and their families in Amritsar and later at Raikot (Ludhiana district).[17] For these crimes, eight Kukas were hanged and others sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.[18] The government reimposed orders restricting Ram Singh to his village and forbade the assemblage of Kukas at religious festivals. But Kuka passions had been inflamed, and, on the Maghi festival in January 1872, they flocked in the hundreds to Bhaini. Speeches were made extolling the heroism of the men who had been hanged. It was also bruited about that the time prophesied by the sau sākhī for the restoration of Sikh power was at hand. Ram Singh had some difficulty in persuading his followers to return peacefully to their homes. However, one band decided to ignore their guru's advice and to attack Malerkotla, a Muslim state where slaughter of cows was permitted.

On the way to Malerkotla the gang raided the house of the Sikh zamindar of Malaudh to acquire arms. They were engaged by the zamindar's retainers and, when they entered Malerkotla, by the state constabulary. L. Cowan, the deputy commissioner of Ludhiana, joined the pursuit and captured 68 of the band. Cowan

17 In November 1871, J. W. MacNab, commissioner of Ambala, was asked to make a report on the Kukas. MacNab was convinced that Ram Singh had instigated the murders of the butchers and recommended criminal proceedings against him. No action was taken on MacNab's report.

18 *Crown vs. Fateh Singh and others.* Judgment of the Punjab chief court, dated 9.9.1871 (reference 53) and *Crown vs. Mastan Singh and others.* Judgment of the Punjab Chief Court dated 1.8.1871. See also Dr Ganda Singh's letter on the subject in *The Spokesman* of 29 June 1964.

Among those who were executed was one Gyani Rattan Singh, a zamindar of Patiala, who was held in great esteem by the Kukas and believed by them to have been innocent.

sent a note to his commissioner, T. D. Forsythe, and without any formality blew up 66 of the prisoners by tying them to the mouths of cannons.[19]

Kuka headquarters at Bhaini were searched: only a few kirpans, hatchets, and a pair of ornamental khukries were found. Ram Singh and eleven of his followers were arrested and deported to Burma.[20]

Forsythe then joined Cowan at Malerkotla, where another 16 Kukas were blasted off by cannons. Subsequently, the party went to Malaudh, where four Kukas were in custody. Forsythe relented and sentenced them to life imprisonment.[21]

19 'The gang of rebels, for no other name will adequately characterise them, never numbered more than 125: of these there were at Malodh 2 killed, 4 captured; at Kotla 8 killed, 31 wounded. Of those wounded, 25 or 26 escaped at the time; but 68, including 27 wounded, have been captured in the Patiala state.... The entire gang has thus been nearly destroyed. I propose blowing away from guns, or hanging, the prisoners tomorrow morning at daybreak. Their offence is not an ordinary one. They have not committed mere murder and dacoity; they are open rebels, offering contumacious resistance to constituted authority, and, to prevent the spreading of the disease, it is absolutely necessary that repressive measures should be prompt and stern. I am sensible of the great responsibility I incur; but I am satisfied that I act for the best, and that this incipient insurrection must be stamped out at once.' *Parliamentary Papers on the Kuka Outbreak,* p. 11.

The commissioner, T. D. Forsythe, who had earlier advised Cowan not to be too hasty, supported the action of his deputy. He wrote: 'My dear Cowan, I fully approve and confirm all you have done. You have acted admirably. I am coming out.' Letter dated 18 January 1872. Ibid., p. 53.

20 Forsythe wrote: 'The complicity of Ram Singh in the outrages committed by his followers at Malodh and in the state of Malerkotla has not yet been thoroughly inquired into; and it is a fact that he reported to the police the intention of Lehna Singh and Hera Singh, the chief actors in the present case, to commit outrages. But by his own admission his followers make use of his name and take advantage of his presence among them to call on their fellows to commit murders and create disturbances.' Letter dated 18 January 1872, Ibid., p. 12.

21 There was strong criticism in the Anglo-Indian press of the barbarous action taken by Cowan. The Government of India ordered an enquiry, as a result of which Cowan was dismissed and Forsythe was transferred to a post outside the Punjab.

Whatever little sympathy the Sikhs may have had with the revivalist aspect of the Namdhari movement was forfeited by the resort to violence against poor Muslims and the defiance of the administration. The community was strongly pro-British, and Sikh leaders took the earliest opportunity to reaffirm their loyalty. The maharajah of Patiala ordered the arrest of all Kukas in his state.[22] A meeting of Sikh sardars in Amritsar presented an address to the lieutenant governor describing the Kukas as a 'wicked and misguided sect' who 'by their misconduct and evil designs' had injured the honour of the Sikh community in the estimation of the government, 'and well-nigh levelled with the dust the services we [i.e. the Sikhs] had rendered to the government, such as those for instance performed in 1857....'[23]

After some years in gaol, Ram Singh was allowed to receive visitors as well as to communicate with his followers. Once again he toyed with the idea of fomenting revolution in the Punjab. His followers discovered more copies of the sau sākhī[24] predicting a Russian invasion of India and the founding of the dynasty of Ram Singh. Ram Singh sent an emissary to Russia to elicit help;[25] but the mission produced no results. He also realized that the Sikhs were unwilling to revolt against their rulers. Ram Singh gave up hope and in his later days lost faith in the prophecies fabricated by his enthusiastic followers. His later letters from

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The viceroy's opinion was conveyed in the following words: 'The course followed by Mr. Cowan was illegal, that it was not palliated by any public necessity, and that it was characterised by incidents which gave it a complexion of barbarity.' Letter dated 30 April 1872 from E. C. Bayley to the Punjab government. Ibid., pp. 54–8.

22 The maharajah's *firmān* (proclamation) dated 19 January 1872.

23 *The Englishman*, 23 March 1872.

24 These sau sākhīs were claimed to have been found in a tank near Sirsa. Under instructions of the lieutenant governor, Sir Robert Egerton, they were translated into English. (See note by D. E. McCracken, assistant to the inspector general of police, Punjab Home Department, Judicial Proceedings, August 1882, Nos 217–218B.)

25 See P. C. Roy, *Gurcharan Singh's Mission in Central Asia*, pamphlet published by author.

gaol show clearly that he did not consider himself a guru but a *rapatī* (mouthpiece) of the guru. Occasionally, when the way he had been treated made him angry, he invoked the aid of his guru (and, strangely enough, of the Hindu goddesses of destruction Sakti, Bhagwati, Jagdamba)[26] to rid the land of the filthy cow-eating whites.

Ram Singh died in Rangoon in 1885 and was succeeded by his younger brother Hari Singh. Hari Singh was not allowed to move out of Bhaini for the 21 years he was guru. On his death in 1906, he was succeeded by his son Pratap Singh (d.1961), who was, in his turn, succeeded by the present head, Jagjit Singh.[27]

No reliable figures of the numbers of Kukas have been compiled.[28] They have two centres, one at Bhaini and the other at Jiwan Nagar near Sirsa in Hissar district. They publish four journals, of which the *Satyug*, a weekly paper in Gurmukhi, is the oldest and the most widely circulated.[29]

The Kukas are a distinct sub-sect who maintain little intercourse with the parent community. They have their own gurdwaras and only on rare occasions deign to join Sikh religious processions. They do not intermarry with Sikhs unless the party concerned accepts their persuasion.

The Kukas, nevertheless, more strictly adhere to the puritanical faith of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind than other Sikhs. Their gurdwaras are not ostentatious, and their worship is devoid of

26 See Ram Singh's letters from gaol published in Ganda Singh, *Kūkiāṉ di Vithiā*, pp. 213–14.

27 Jagjit Singh has no son and is likely to be succeeded by his younger brother, Bir Singh, or Bir Singh's son, Dalip Singh.

28 In 1871, the Kukas claimed a membership of nearly one million. The census of 1891 however listed only 10,541, and the figure had only gone up to 13,788 in the census of 1901.

Today the Kukas claim to have a following of between 5–10 lacs, consisting largely of Jats, Ramgarhias, Aroras, and Mazhabi Sikhs. They are concentrated in the districts of Hissar, Amritsar, and Ludhiana. (Author's interview with Guru Jagjit Singh.)

29 Other Kuka journals are *Nawāṉ Hiṅdustān*, a Gurmukhi daily published in New Delhi; *Nāmdhārī Samācār*, a Hindi quarterly published in Delhi; *Sacā Mārg*, a Gurmukhi weekly published in Samana.

the elements of idolatry (rich canopies and coverings over the Granth, waving of censers, etc.) which have become common practice in orthodox circles. And the Kukas themselves lead austere lives; they wear the simplest of clothes and observe a rigid code of conduct; they are punctilious in attending service in their gurdwaras and in observing the taboos of food, drink, and personal deportment. They also have a place in the history of the freedom movement of India. Ram Singh was the first man to evolve non-cooperation and the use of *swadeshi* (indigenous goods) as political weapons. The boycott of British goods, government schools, law courts, and the postal service and the exhortation to wear only hand-spun cloth (*khaddar*) which Ram Singh propagated in the 1860s were taken up again sixty years later by Mahatma Gandhi.

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9. Singh Sabha and Social Reform

The Background: Christian and Hindu Missionary Activity

The Nirankari, Radha Soami, and Namdhari movements made small impact on the Sikh masses. The first was confined to the urban community in the north-west; the second was largely concerned with theistic problems; while the third was temporarily blasted out of existence on the parade ground of Malerkotla. All three developed into schismatic coteries owing allegiance to its particular guru and practising its own esoteric ritual. The evils they had set out to abolish continued unabated. Sikhs of lower castes continued to be discriminated against; the rich continued to indulge in drink and debauchery; Brahmanical Hinduism, with its pantheon of gods and goddesses, mumbling of Sanskrit mantras, belief in soothsayers, astrologers and casters of horoscopes, continued as before. Even Sikhs who criticized these sects for worshipping gurus other than the recognized ten, were not averse to prostrating themselves before the Bedi and Sodhi descendants of Nanak and Gobind or paying homage to some saint or the other exactly as if he were a guru.

As serious as the decline in moral standards was the decline in the number of Sikhs. When the Khalsa was in the ascendant, large numbers of Hindus had begun to grow their hair and beards and pay lip-worship to the Sikh gurus. After annexation,

these time-servers returned to the Hindu fold. Genuine Sikh families who had cultivated close social relations with such Hindus either followed suit or became clean-shaven sahajdhārīs. Sikhs, most of whom had been Hindus a few generations earlier and had never given up social intercourse with the Hindus, were now faced with the prospect of being reabsorbed into Hinduism and ceasing to exist as a separate community.[1]

The inherent weakness of the Sikh body politic was only one factor of disintegration; there were three others: the activities of Christian missions, the proselytization by a new Hindu organization known as the Arya Samaj, and the rationalism that came with the introduction of scientific concepts.

In 1835, an American Presbyterian Mission had been established at Ludhiana. Immediately after annexation, it spread its activities from Malwa to Majha;[2] the Church Missionary Society opened centres around Amritsar and Lahore and in the hill districts. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Salvation Army, the Methodists, Episcopalians, Moravians, and several Roman Catholic orders vied with each other in gaining converts.[3] Christian missionaries were actively supported by English officials.[4]

1 This was the opinion of as shrewd and scholarly observers as Sir Richard Temple and Denzil Ibbetson, who noted in the *Census Report of 1881:* '...The Sikhs are the most uneducated class in the Punjab.... On the whole there seems reason to believe that notwithstanding the stimulus of the Kabul campaign (tales of the heroism of Sikh soldiers in the northwest frontier campaign were given wide publicity), Sikhism is on the decline.'

2 Rev. John Newton and Rev. C. W. Forman visited Lahore in 1849. Maconachie, *Rowland Bateman.*

3 *Imperial Gazetteer of India 1908,* xx, 291–2.

4 Bateman's biographer records a meeting at Lahore on 19 February 1852, with Archdeacon Pratt of Calcutta in the chair, where it was stated that: 'Henry and John Lawrence, Robert Montgomery, Donald McLeod, Herbert Edwardes, Reynell Taylor, Robert Cust, Arthur Roberts, William Martin, C. R. Saunders and others, were all interested in starting the Punjab Church Missionary Association.' Maconachie, *Rowland Bateman,* pp. 12–13.

The growth of Christianity in the Punjab is borne out by census figures: 1881—3796; 1891—19,547; 1901—37,980; 1911—163,994; 1921—315,931; 1931—414,788.

The conversion of Maharajah Dalip Singh in 1853 was the first feather in the cap of the Christian missionaries and a grievous shock to the Sikhs. The same year a Christian mission school was opened in Amritsar. With the ardour usual to new converts, the exiled maharajah offered to support it.

Apart from Maharajah Dalip Singh, most of the early Sikh converts to Christianity were from the untouchable castes. Within a short time *īsāī*, the word meaning Christian, acquired a pejorative sense and became synonymous with *cūhṛā*, the Punjabi word for the untouchable sweeper. It was then that the neophytes realized that neither the patronage of the padre nor the seeming dignity of the sola topee could eradicate the stigma of untouchability. Thereafter the rate of conversion from the lower castes declined. Christian missionaries turned their attention to the well-to-do Jat and Kshatriya castes. Several Sikh families of note accepted Christianity.[5] The conversions of educated and aristocratic families disturbed the Sikh leaders more than the loss of their untouchable brethren.[6]

More serious than the activities of Christian missionaries, however, was the challenge of renascent Hinduism, chiefly from the Arya Samaj.

The Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayanand[7] Saraswati, whose motto was 'Back to the Vedas'. According to him, the

5 The best known of these families was that of Raja Harnam Singh, brother of the maharajah of Kapurthala. Raja Harnam Singh's sons and daughter rose to eminent positions. Amrit Kaur, a friend of Mahatma Gandhi, was minister of health in the central government; Maharaj Singh became governor of Bombay; Dalip Singh, a judge of the Punjab High Court.

Sadhu Sundar Singh (b.1889), Jat Sikh of Rampur (Patiala state), was the most celebrated Indian convert to Christianity. He was a mystic. He spent most of his years walking up and down the Hindustan-Tibet Road. He disappeared some time after 1935.

6 In 1873, when four Sikh boys of the mission school of Amritsar announced their decision to turn Christian, there were protest meetings all over the Punjab; Sikh preachers talked to the boys and prevented them from abandoning their ancestral faith.

7 Dayanand (1824–83) was the son of a Saivite Brahmin of Kathiawar. Dayanand left home at the age of 21 and spent the next eighteen years

Vedas inculcated belief in one omnipresent but invisible God and in the equality of human beings; he was therefore against the worship of idols and the caste system. Dayanand was a forceful orator. Within a few years his voice was heard all over India. His iconoclastic monotheism and egalitarianism had special appeal for the Sikhs.

In the summer of 1877, Dayanand came to the Punjab, where he received a great welcome from the Hindus and Sikhs. He opened a branch of the Arya Samaj at Lahore. Proselytization (*śudhī*—purification) was an important part of its activities, and it gained many Hindu and Sikh adherents.

It did not take the orthodox Sikhs long to appreciate that Dayanand's belief in the infallibility of the Vedas was as uncompromising as that of the Muslims in the Koran.[8] The Granth was to him a book of secondary importance, and the Sikh gurus men of little learning; Nanak, he denounced as a *dambhī* (hypocrite). Dayanand was contemptuous of Sikh theologians because of their ignorance of Sanskrit: his favourite phrase for any one who did not measure up to him was *mahā mūrkh* (great fool). Dayanand set the tone; his zealous admirers followed suit.[9]

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studying the Sanskrit religious texts under the guidance of a blind scholar, Swami Virajanand. He spent the remaining twenty years of his life preaching in northern India.

8 'I regard the Vedas as self-evident truth, admitting of no doubt and depending on the authority of no other book; being represented in nature, the Kingdom of God.' Dayanand, *Handbook of the Arya Samaj*, p. 35.

Max Muller's opinion on Dayanand's attitude to the Vedas is illuminating: 'By the most incredible interpretations Swami Dayanand succeeded in persuading himself and others that everything worth knowing, even the most recent inventions of modern science, were alluded to in the Vedas. Steam-engines, railways and steam boats, were all known to have been known, at least in their germ, to the poets of the Vedas; for *veda*, he argued, means knowledge, and how could anything be hid from that?' *Biographical Essays*, ii, 170.

9 The *Āryā Samācar*, an organ of the Samaj, published the following

Nānak śāh fakīr ne nayā calāyā panth.
Idhar udhar se jor ke likh mārā ik granth
Pahle cele kar liye, piche badlā bhes

The Sikhs turned their backs on Dayanand; instead they joined the Muslims and Christians in demanding the suppression of Dayanand's book, *Satyārth Prakāś*,[10] which maligned the prophets of their three faiths.

Besides the activities of the Christian missions and the Arya Samajists, other winds of change began to blow across the province. There was an influx of Bengali intellectuals, who brought with them the message of liberal Hinduism of Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1771–1833) and the Brahmo Samaj. They opened a branch in Lahore in 1864 and won a notable convert in Dayal Singh Majithia.[11] Equally influential were the Theosophists, many of whom (including Dr Annie Besant) lectured in the Punjab. The interest in India and Hindu religion generated by the publication of the works of Max Muller, Sir Edwin Arnold, and Dr Monier Williams was followed by the publication of many works on the Punjab.[12] The Sikhs were once again unlucky in their European

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Sir par sāfā bāndh ke, rakh līne sab kes.

Nanak, the king of fakirs, founded a new community.

He collected an assortment of writings and put them in a volume.

He gathered a few disciples and then changed his garb;

He wound a turban round his head and grew his hair long.

Ganda Singh, *A History of the Khalsa College*, p. 7.

10 *Satyārth Prakāś* was published in 1874. It was banned by the Punjab government because of offensive references to Prophet Mohammed. An amended version is now in circulation.

11 Dayal Singh Majithia (d.1898) was the son of the famous Lehna Singh, minister of Maharajah Ranjit Singh. He became president of the Indian Association, which was affiliated to the Indian National Congress. He financed the *Tribune* and set up a trust which founded the Dayal Singh College and a public library. The *Tribune* started publishing in 1881. It continues to this day to have almost a monopoly of circulation in English-educated Punjabi circles.

12 The more important of these were Sir Richard Temple's *Legends of the Punjab, Names and Name Places,* and the monthly magazine, *Punjab Notes and Queries;* Bosworth Smith's *Life of Lord Lawrence;* Ross's *Land of Five Rivers*; and above all Rudyard Kipling's stories, many of which had Punjab's cantonments as their background.

Western interest in the Punjab was an important factor in reviving the interest of the Punjabis in their own history and cultural traditions. What

interpreter. A German philologist, Dr Ernest Trumpp, was engaged by the India office to translate the Granth into English. Trumpp tried his hand at the first few pages and abandoned further translation because the language did not conform to the rules of Sanskrit grammar, and Sikh theologians refused to collaborate with him. Trumpp's opuscule when published caused no small disappointment. His preface had ill-natured comments on the text of the Granth; and his translation was inaccurate, dull, and prosy. Yet who could the Sikhs blame except themselves?

The literary and educational movement gathered momentum. In the 1870s and 1880s an Oriental College, a University library, museum, school of arts, science institute, and a medical college were opened in the Punjab. Hindus and Muslims started schools and colleges of their own; only the Sikhs lagged behind.[13]

Singh Sabhas of Amritsar and Lahore

Four years before the setting up of the Arya Samaj, the Sikh gentry of Amritsar had convened meetings to protest against the speeches of a Hindu orator who had made scurrilous remarks against the Sikh gurus. These protest meetings had been organized by a society which described itself as the Singh Sabha. It had the support of the rich, landed gentry and the orthodox.[14] The society's objects included the revival of the teachings of the gurus, production of religious literature in Punjabi,

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Monier Williams did for India, Dr Leitner sought to do for the Punjab. He was the spirit behind the *Anjuman-i-Punjāb* and the *Panjāb Akhbār*, published at Lahore. He set up a Punjab Institute at Woking near London.

13 'The Catholic principles which it [Granth] inculcates are known but to a few and clouds of prejudice and superstition have spread over the horizon of the Sikh religion. Now many Singh Sabhas have sprung up in different parts of the Punjab and the leaders of the community have awakened to their present condition; and there are ample grounds now to hope that there would be a Sikh revival.' *Tribune*, 7 February 1885.

14 Leaders of the Amritsar Singh Sabha were Khem Singh Bedi, Bikram Singh Ahluwalia of Kapurthala, and Thakar Singh Sandhawalia. Several Sikh theologians including the celebrated Gyani Gyan Singh took active interest.

and a campaign against illiteracy. The founders also sought to 'interest high placed Englishmen in, and assure their association with, the educational programme of the Singh Sabha.' To ensure the patronage of the government the Sabha resolved 'to cultivate loyalty to the crown'.[15] Thakar Singh Sandhawalia was president and Gyani Gyan Singh secretary of the Amritsar Shri Guru Singh Sabha. The government extended its patronage to the educational programme of the organization.[16]

In 1879 another Singh Sabha was formed at Lahore. Leaders of this Sabha were a group of educated and energetic men of the middle class.[17] The governor of the Punjab, Sir Robert Egerton, agreed to become its patron and induced the viceroy,

15 The mood of sycophantic loyalty to the British can be gauged from the message of farewell that was sent to Lord Ripon by the Sri Guru Singh Sabha by Man Singh, president of the Golden Temple Committee: 'Our bodies are the exclusive possession of the British. Moreover, that we are solemnly and religiously bound to serve Her Majesty; that in discharging this duty we act according to the wishes of our Great Guru, the ever living God and that whenever and wherever need be felt for us, we wish to be the foremost of all Her Majesty's subjects, to move and uphold the honour of the crown; that we reckon ourselves as the favourite sons of our empress-mother, although living far distant from Her Majesty's feet and that we regard the people of England as-our kindred brethren.' *Tribune*, 15 November 1889.

16 The policy of educating the landed aristocracy and training it for leadership was started by the lieutenant governor, Sir Charles Aitchison (1882–7). The Aitchison Chiefs College at Lahore admitted only sons of princes and rich zamindars listed in Griffin's *Rajas of the Punjab*. Extension of the same policy produced, in the earlier stages, close collaboration between leaders of the Singh Sabha (drawn almost exclusively from the rich and loyal classes of Sikhs) and the English rulers.

17 They were Gurmukh Singh Chandhur, Dit Singh, and Jawahar Singh Kapur. Gurmukh Singh Chandhur (1849–98) was employed as a cook in the palace kitchen of the raja of Kapurthala. He was given a stipend by the raja and after completing his studies became the first professor of Punjabi at the Oriental College (1885). He was the author of many books in Punjabi including *A History of India*. Dit Singh (1853–1901) was a Mazhabi of Patiala. He was amongst those most eager to welcome Dayanand and later his most vigorous critic. Jawahar Singh Kapur (1859–1901), a Khatri Sikh, was employed as a clerk in the north-western railway.

Lord Lansdowne, to lend his support.[18] The Lahore Singh Sabha opened branches in many towns, sent missionaries to the villages, established liaison with Sikh regiments, and began publishing journals in Punjabi.

In 1883 the Lahore and Amritsar Sabhas were merged, but the association proved a failure. The Amritsar Sabha had been constituted by an easy-going group of conservatives dominated by men like Khem Singh Bedi, who, by virtue of his descent from Nanak, was wont to accept homage due to a guru. The Lahore group was radical and strongly opposed to the institution of 'gurudom'. The two groups clashed on the right of untouchable Sikhs to worship in the gurdwaras; the conservatives sided with the priests who allowed untouchables to enter only at specified hours without the right to make offerings. The debate became acrimonious. The conservatives dissociated themselves from the movement and then became openly hostile.[19]

The rapid expansion of the Arya Samaj[20] and the anti-Sikh bias of many of its leaders[21] constituted a challenge to the Singh

18 At a function at Patiala the viceroy said: 'With this movement the Government of India is in hearty sympathy. We appreciate the many admirable qualities of the Sikh nation, and it is a pleasure to us to know that, while in days gone by we recognised in them a gallant and formidable foe, we are today able to give them a foremost place amongst the true and loyal subjects of Her Majesty the Queen Empress.' *Tribune*, 23 October 1890.

19 In 1887, Udai Singh Bedi, a nephew of Khem Singh Bedi, filed a libel suit against *The Khālsā Akhbār* run by the Lahore Sabha. The paper had described the Bedi as the 'guru of Satan'. The editor was fined and the Lahore Sabha's publishing enterprise had to close down for some time. *Tribune*, 7 March 1888.

20 The Arya Samaj opened many schools in the province. In 1886, the DAV (Dayanand Anglo-Vedic) College was opened at Lahore.

21 At the eleventh anniversary meeting of the Punjab branch of the Arya Samaj in November 1888, the speakers again chose to make derogatory references to Sikhism. Prof. Guru Dutt said, 'If the Swami had wished to become a general, he would have shown himself several thousand times better than Bonaparte.... Yes, Keshab Chander (Sen) and Guru Gobind Singh were not even one hundredth part of our Swami Dayananda Saraswati ji. The Sikhs might have some religion in them, but their guru had no learning whatever.... If Swami Dayananda Saraswati ji Maharaj had called

Sabha movement. It also brought about the final rupture between the Samaj and some of its Sikh supporters.

The two Singh Sabhas again rejoined hands and doubled their efforts to start a college of their own.[22] At a largely attended meeting held in Lahore, a plan was drawn up; a *hukumnāmā* was issued from the Golden Temple asking Sikhs to give a tenth of their income (*dasvaṅdh*) towards the building of the college.[23] English well-wishers organized a committee in London to raise funds in England. Sikh princes, encouraged by the viceroy and the commander-in-chief, made handsome donations; the Anglo-Indian *Civil and Military Gazette* supported the cause with enthusiasm. Money began to pour in from all over the province. On 5 March 1892, the lieutenant governor, Sir James Lyall, who had taken personal interest in the venture, laid the foundation stone of the Khalsa College at Amritsar.[24]

Guru Nanak a *dambhī* (a hypocrite, an impostor), then what is wrong therein? He (the Swami) had the sun of the Vedas in his hands.... He was not the person to be suppressed by anyone.' Ganda Singh, *History of the Khalsa College,* p. 8.

22 Jawahar Singh Kapur addressed meetings in Amritsar telling his Sikh audiences that the Arya Samaj had its institutions to teach Sanskrit and the Vedas, the Muslims had made provision for the teaching of the Koran at Aligarh, but the Sikhs had no institution for the study of Gurmukhi and the Granth. *Tribune,* 15 August 1890.

23 The trustees of the College Committee included both Sikhs and Englishmen. They were Maharajah Pertap Singh of Nabha, Sir Attar Singh of Bhadaur, Gurdayal Singh, Dharam Singh, Dewan Gurmukh Singh of Patiala, Mr Bell, Colonel Holroyde, and General Black. *Civil and Military Gazette,* May 9, 1890.

24 An Englishman, Dr S. C. Oman, was appointed principal. The chief justice of the Punjab High Court, W. H. Rattigan, became president of the college establishment committee, which was controlled by the vice-president, Sir Attar Singh of Bhadaur, and the secretary, Jawahar Singh Kapur.

Gratitude to the English patrons can be judged from the proposals submitted for the name of the college. The maharajah of Nabha wanted to name it the 'Loyal Lyall Khalsa College' (letter to Gurmukh Singh dated 22 December 1899); the establishment committee was content to name it just Lyall Khalsa College. It was only the reluctance of Sir James himself that saved the College from being prefixed either Loyal or Lyall.

It was inevitable an organization such as the Singh Sabha which had such multifarious activities should evolve its own politics as well. These crystallized in the formation in 1902 of the Chief Khalsa Diwan pledged 'to cultivate loyalty to the crown,' to safeguard Sikh rights vis-à-vis the other communities, and to fight for adequate representation of Sikhs in services, particularly the army. Almost from its inception its most effective leader was Sunder Singh Majithia.[25]

The most important aspects of the Singh Sabha movement were educational and literary. From 1908 onwards, an education conference was convened every year to take stock of the progress of literacy in the community and collect money to build more schools. The teaching of Gurmukhi and the Sikh scriptures was compulsory in these Khalsa schools.[26]

The impetus given to education in its turn stimulated the publication of books,[27] magazines, tracts, and newspapers.[28]

25 Sir Sunder Singh (1872–1941), a descendant of the Majithias in the service of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, was a Shergil Jat of village Majitha near Amritsar. He was an ardent supporter of the British Raj. He was secretary of the Chief Khalsa Diwan from its inception in 1902 to 1921 and president of the Khalsa College Committee from 1920 till his death. He was a member of the provincial council and central assembly and held innumerable ministerial appointments. Majithia was a wealthy landowner and a sugar magnate. There will be many references to him in the following pages.

Senior colleagues of Sunder Singh Majithia were Harbans Singh of Attari (grandson of the hero of Sabraon) and Arjan Singh Bagarian, whose family had been religious mentors to the Sikh aristocracy.

26 In 1856 the Education Department of the Punjab government was constituted and a beginning made to set up schools independent of mosques, temple, or gurdwaras, to which they had till then been attached. In north-west Punjab Sir Khem Singh Bedi took a prominent part in building Khalsa schools. Sikh schools were also built in Amritsar, Lahore, Ferozepur, and in some villages such as Kairon, Gharjákh, Chuhar Chak, and Bhasaur. One of the best-known institutions was the Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya of Ferozepur founded by Takht Singh.

27 The *Anjuman-i-Panjāb* (founded in 1865) was responsible for translating many important English books into Punjabi. In 1877 Punjabi was introduced as a subject in the Oriental College at Lahore; in 1882 the Singh Sabha organized a *Panjābī Pracārini Sabhā* to popularize the use of Punjabi.

28 Over a dozen papers owed their existence to the Singh Sabha

The earliest venture in Punjabi journalism was the weekly *Khālsā Akhbār*. In 1899 the *Khālsā Samācar* was founded and soon became the leading theological journal of the community. Its circulation increased under the editorship of Vir Singh, who rose to prominence as a novelist, poet, and a commentator of scriptural writings.[29] Vir Singh also started the *Khalsa Tract Society* and published literature on different aspects of Sikh history and religion.

A spate of books on Sikhism, both in Gurmukhi and English, were published. Of the Gurmukhi, Gyani Gyan Singh's *Panth Prakāś* and *Tawārīkh Guru Khālsā* and Kahan Singh's voluminous encyclopaedia of Sikh literature (*Guru Śabdaratnākar Mahānkoś*) were of lasting significance. M. A. Macauliffe's monumental work on the life and teachings of the Sikh gurus[30] was also published at this time.

The Singh Sabha movement not only checked the relapse of the Sikhs into Hinduism but retaliated by carrying proselytizing activities into the Hindu camp. Large numbers of Hindus of northern and western Punjab and Sindh became sahajdhārī Sikhs and the sahajdhārīs were baptized to become the Khalsa.[31]

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movement. *Sukahi Subodhinī*, Amritsar (1875); *Akāl Prakāś*, Amritsar (1876); *Gurmukhi Akhbār*, Lahore (1850); *Khālsā Prakāś*, Lahore (1884); *Srī Gurmat Prakāś*, Rawalpindi (1885); *Panjāb Darpan*, Amritsar (1885); *Khālsā Akhbār* restarted in Lahore in 1886; and the *Vidyārak*, Lahore (1886); *The Khālsā Gazette* and *Loyal Gazette* (which later became the *Sher-i-Panjāb*) were published in Urdu.

29 See Appendix 1.

30 *The Sikh Religion* was published in 1909 in six volumes by the Oxford University Press.

31 The following figures show the increase in the Sikh population:

Year	*Actual Number of Sikhs*	*Variation Per cent in:* *Sikhs*	*Total Population*
1881	1,706,165		
1891	1,849,371	+ 8.4	+ 10.1
1901	2,102,896	+ 13.7	+ 6.3
1911	2,883,729	+ 37.1	- 2.2
1921	3,110,060	+ 7.8	+ 5.7

Punjab Census Report, 1921.

The rise and expansion of the Arya Samaj in the Punjab had a decisive bearing on the course of Hindu-Sikh relations and on the pattern of anti-British political movements in the province. The *sudhī* crusade launched by the Samaj was fiercely resisted by the Sikhs. The more the Samajists claimed Sikhism to be a branch of Hinduism, the more the Sikhs insisted that they were a distinct and separate community. This action and reaction broke up the close social relationship which had existed between the two sister communities. It found expression in the publication of a booklet *Ham Hiṅdu Nahiṅ Haiṉ*—we are not Hindus—by the scholarly Kahan Singh, who was then chief minister of Nabha. Although the Singh Sabha movement petered out in the 1920s it left a legacy of a chronically defensive attitude towards Hinduism.

Dayanand's teachings also had a strong political flavour. In proclaiming his intention to purify Hinduism of its post-Vedic accretions, he desired to liberate Hindu society from non-Hindu domination. His criticism of Islam and Christianity in effect was the criticism of Indian Muslims and the English. Consequently the renaissance of Hinduism brought about by the Arya Samaj had a strong anti-Muslim and anti-British bias which was often discernible in the utterances of Punjabi Hindu nationalists, large numbers of whom were Arya Samajists, for example, Lajpat Rai,[32] Ajit Singh, Hans Raj, and the majority of Punjabi Hindu terrorists. The domination of the Indian National Congress by Arya Samajists gave the freedom movement an aspect of Hindu resurgence and was chiefly responsible for the aloofness of the Muslims and the Sikhs.[33]

32 Lala Lajpat Rai (1865–1928), the most eminent of Punjab's nationalists, was born into a Hindu-Sikh family. He was also an active Samajist and for a while president of the Hindu Mahasabha.

33 The remarks of Dr Griswold are illuminating. 'The watchword of Pandit Dayanand was back to the Vedas. With this religious watchword, another watchword was implicitly, if not explicitly, combined, namely India for Indians. Combining these two we have the principle, both religious and political, the religion of India as well as the sovereignty of India ought to belong to the Indian people, in other words, Hindu religion for the Indians and Indian sovereignty for the Indians.' *Indian Evangelical Review*, January 1892, quoted by Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, pp. 111–12.

PART IV

POLITICAL MOVEMENTS: MARXIST, NATIONAL, AND SECTARIAN

The reclamation of desert lands by the extension of canals, patronage in the services, and the introduction of the western system of education produced economic, social, and political changes in the Sikh community. The canal colonies eased the pressure on land and brought unprecedented prosperity to the peasantry. Their prosperity was, however, short-lived; within a few years, holdings were fragmented and became uneconomical. Rural indebtedness increased. Families which could raise money sent their younger sons to explore other avenues of employment or to seek their fortune in foreign lands. Sikh communities sprang up in Burma, Malaya, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines, and China; and from the Asian coast the more enterprising ventured across the Pacific to Canada and the United States. At the same time small entrepreneurs set up business in countries on the eastern coast of Africa. On the American continent Sikh emigrants came up against racial discrimination and in turn developed a xenophobia which provided fertile ground for the dissemination of Marxism.

Enthusiasm for the British Raj, which had reached its climax during the First World War (1914–18), rapidly declined. The government's refusal to protest against Canadian and American maltreatment of Sikh immigrants, disappointment over constitutional reforms, the shooting at Amritsar (April 1919) followed by the repression of the movement to gain control of shrines from hereditary priests, created resentment against British rule. From these movements three political parties emerged: the Communists, the Nationalists, and the Akalis. In the years following the First World War, when steps were taken to increase people's participation in the administration, these three political parties contended for power; much the most influential of them being the Akalis.

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10. Rural Indebtedness and Peasant Agitation

The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt

The reclamation of desert lands by the extension of canal irrigation, combined with facilities for marketing agricultural produce, ushered in an era of prosperity that the Punjab had never seen. But this prosperity brought in its wake other economic changes which radically altered the social fabric of life in the Punjab. A direct consequence of the increase in the earning from agriculture was the increase in the price of land; it rose from a mere Rs 10 per acre in 1870 to more than Rs 100 per acre by the turn of the century.[1] Land became a valuable commodity, and small farmers were unable to resist the temptation to sell their holdings.[2] The number of landless farmers assumed alarming proportions. The famine of

1 H. Calvert, *The Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab*, p. 219. The price of land continued to rise. In 1925 it was Rs 438 per acre; in 1933–4, it touched Rs 477 per acre.

2 'That dull animal the peasant by degrees realised that he was the possessor of, in his eyes, unlimited credit and used it.' Thorburn, *Report on Peasant Indebtedness and Land Alienations*, p. 10.

And once the agriculturist started borrowing, he lost his self-reliance and made it a habit—*carhiā sau te lathā bhau*—when the debt mounts to a hundred, one loses all fear, or, in for a penny in for a pound.

1869[3] attended by heavy mortality of livestock accentuated the problem. Agriculturists were unable to pay revenue due from them and were compelled to borrow.

The 1870s ushered in an era of peasant indebtedness which had never been known in the country before. From 1877—which was another year of serious shortages—it assumed alarming proportions. The elaborate legal system introduced by the British contributed towards the impoverishment of the peasantry and the enrichment of moneylenders and lawyers.[4] 'To permit the profits of husbandry to pass to moneylenders is an intolerable revolution of an odious kind never yet known in India,' wrote Thorburn, 'and yet it is exactly what our system is bringing about.'[5]

Moneylending became a popular occupation.[6] In the past

3 In the famine of 1869, 600,000 head of cattle were lost in four districts of south-eastern Punjab alone. A cattle epidemic in 1877 killed two-thirds of the livestock in Ambala. In 1919–21 the failure of five out of six harvests reduced the cattle at Sirsa by 40 per cent. M. Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, p. 97.

4 The process began in 1859, when three years was fixed as the limitation of all debts unprotected by registered bond—thus forcing creditors to hurry to courts. The introduction of the Civil Procedure Code, the setting up of the Chief Court at Lahore (in 1866), the passing of the Evidence Act and Contract Act in 1872 gave ingenious lawyers and their clients (moneylenders could afford them more than agriculturists) opportunities to prolong litigation. The straw that broke the back of the peasantry was the creation in 1874–5 of munsiffs' courts to try debt disputes. Till then district officers with close knowledge of the peasants' problems and revenue matters had dealt with these disputes simply, cheaply, and equitably. The munsiffs, largely urbanites ignorant of rural affairs, proved to be harsh and often corrupt. Thorburn, *Report on Peasant Indebtedness and Land Alienations*, p. 47.

5 Ibid., p. 11.

6 Between 1902 and 1917 the number of moneylenders almost doubled. In 1902 there were 8400 registered moneylenders in the Punjab. By 1917, their number had increased to over 15,000. H. Calvert, *The Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab*, p. 255.

The Punjab had three communities of moneylenders: Aroras in the western districts, Khatris in the central, and Banias in the southern districts. The first two communities were equally Hindu and Sikh; the Banias were invariably Hindus. Moneylending was seldom practised by Punjabi Mussalmans and very rarely by Jats of any community.

moneylenders had disdained to advance money on anything as worthless as land; now they were eager to lend against the fruits of the land without being encumbered with its ownership. Their business methods were far from ethical; they falsified accounts and charged rates of interest which kept their clients in a state of perpetual indebtedness.[7] The agriculturist did little, however, to ameliorate his condition. The Sikh Jat in particular reverted to his traditional habit of drowning his sorrows in drink; in some districts of Malwa, the preference was for opium.[8] These addictions led to an increase in crime. In addition to family feuds and altercations concerning the use of canal water which were common to all agricultural communities, the Sikh Jat indulged in violence without motive or provocation and had to borrow money to defend himself in court.

There were other causes of indebtedness: inordinate expenses at weddings, providing dowries for daughters or—in some districts where there was acute shortage of women—the cost of buying wives. Punjabi peasants also proved to be more quarrelsome and litigious than any other people of India.[9] A little less than half the adult population of the province attended law courts and spent between 3–4 crores of rupees in litigation every year. In addition, there were natural causes of indebtedness such as the increase of population; in the Punjab, between 1855 and 1881 the population was estimated to have increased by nearly

7 Moneylenders did not necessarily have to be dishonest. Even 'with honest lenders,' wrote Thorburn, 'a good solvent customer's money debt is doubled inside three years and his grain debt inside two years.' *Report on Peasant Indebtedness and Land Alienations*, p. 7.

The accepted rate of interest, was *dām deoṛhe, jins dūnī* (for cash 50 per cent, for grain double).

8 The Sikhs of Ferozepur district earned notoriety for indulgence in drink, opium, and crimes of violence.

9 The Civil Justice Committee in its report published in 1925 found that, in proportion to their numbers, the Punjabis filed twice as many suits as the people of the United Provinces. About 2½ million, that is, 40 per cent of the adult population, attended the courts every year as parties or witnesses. H. Calvert, *The Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab*, p. 372.

20 per cent.[10] The pressure on land became heavy and holdings became uneconomical.[11] The halcyon days ushered in by the opening up of the canal colonies were soon over.

Land Alienation Act, 1900

Murders of Hindu and Sikh moneylenders by exasperated peasant debtors became a common phenomenon in the western districts.[12] The government realized the dangers of having

10 To make a fair comparison between the first (1855) and third census (1881), to the figures of the 1855 census must be added two sets of figures—'the corresponding census of the Delhi territory, namely Delhi, Gurgaon, part of Karnal, Hissar and Rohtak was taken under the N. W. Provinces Govt. on 1st January 1853 while the census of Bhattiana or Sirsa was a settlement census taken village by village between 1852 and 1863.' See Ibbetson's report on the *Punjab Census 1881*, I, 8.

11 Thorburn reporting in 1896 on conditions in villages in Sialkot district wrote: 'Congestion can hardly go further, and the sub-division of holdings is consequently so great that quite half of the proprietary families have less than five cultivated acres to live on, enough in average and good years, but insufficient in seasons of drought, even though land be well-irrigated.' *Peasant Indebtedness and Land Alienations,* p. 2.

According to Calvert, the average holding of land was 7-8 acres per head constituted as follows:

17.9 per cent of the people owned less than one acre; their holdings amounted to 1 per cent of the land.

40.4 per cent of the people owned between 1–5 acres; their holdings amounted to 11 per cent of the land.

26.2 per cent of the people owned between 5–15 acres; their holdings amounted to 26.6 per cent of the land.

11.8 per cent of the people owned between 15–50 acres; their holdings amounted to 35.6 per cent of the land.

3.7 per cent of the people owned more than 50 acres; their holdings amounted to 25.7 per cent of the land.

H. Calvert, *The Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab,* pp. 172–3.

12 Muslims formed 56 per cent of the population and owed at least 50–60 crores of Punjab's rural debt calculated at 100 crores of rupees. M. Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt,* pp. 19–20.

The census of 1921 is not sufficiently detailed to give all the information required, but, roughly, the proportion of agriculturists to others in the three communities was as follows:

disgruntled peasantry—particularly a peasantry from which it drew the largest number of recruits for the army and on whose loyalty depended the internal security of the country.[13] The Land Alienation Act was designed to protect the agriculturists from the clutches of the moneylenders. It forbade the attachment of land in execution of decrees and outlawed mortgages which had a conditional sale clause attached to them. It also forbade (except by special sanction) the sale of land by members of agricultural tribes to non-agriculturists and declared illegal mortgages of land by agriculturists to non-agriculturists unless provision was made for automatic redemption. To ensure implementation of these provisions, the act limited leases of land to periods of not more than five years.

The act succeeded in safeguarding the interests of cultivators; but it also sowed the seeds of racial separatism. The question as to who was or was not an agriculturist was not decided by actual occupation but by caste. Thus all Jats, Rajputs, and members of scheduled castes were declared agriculturists, while all Khatris, Aroras, and Banias were classed as non-agriculturists. The act did not provide for an exception in the case of Jat moneylenders or Arora agriculturists. In certain districts Brahmins were declared agriculturists, in others, non-agriculturists. Cases of individual hardship were not as serious as the breaking up of the population on a new racial basis. Muslims, amongst whom caste considerations mattered little,

	Agriculturists	*Non-Agriculturists*	*Total*
Muslims	6,728,000	4,716,000	11,444,000
Hindus	2,211,000	4,368,000	6,579,000
Sikhs	1,508,000	784,000	2,292,000
	10,447,000	9,868,000	20,315,000

Calvert, *Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab*, p. 269.

13 In a note in 1895, on the proposal to check alienation of land, the lieutenant governor, Sir D. Fitzpatrick, warned that if landowners were reduced to the condition of tenants or labourers they would constitute 'a political danger of formidable dimensions.' Government of India Records, *Agricultural Indebtedness and Land Transfers*, II, *Punjab Correspondence*, p. 2.

were not particularly affected, nor, for precisely the opposite reason, were the Hindus. Hindi-speaking Hindu Jats were concentrated in Hariana and had little in common with the Punjabi-speaking Khatri or Arora Hindu of the Punjab. The community most adversely affected was the Sikhs. They had gone a long way in breaking the barriers of caste; and there were a sizeable number of Khatri and Arora Sikhs who, because they were in agriculture, had developed an identity of economic interest with their Jat co-religionists. The Land Alienation Act severed the links between the Jat Sikh farmer and the non-Jat Sikh farmer and put them in opposing camps. As a result, while the Jat Sikh was drawn closer to the Jat Mussalman and the Jat Hindu, the Khatri and the Arora Sikh drew closer to the Khatri and Arora Hindu.

Common economic interests were reflected in political life with the Sikh Jats aligned with other Jats against non-Jat Sikhs. Economic and political differences ultimately affected social life as well. Sikh Jats preferred to marry into Hindu Jat families rather than into non-Jat Sikhs. And Sikh Khatris and Aroras preferred to intermarry with corresponding Hindu castes rather than with Jat Sikhs. Finally, there was the third racial group amongst the Sikhs—the untouchables. Sikh untouchables found that they had more in common with Hindu untouchables than with the higher caste Sikhs. They sought the statutory privileges accorded to 'scheduled castes'. In short, with the Land Alienation Act, race came to matter more than religion. The Sikh community split into three racial divisions—the Jats, the non-Jats (which included Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas), and the untouchables (Mazhabis, Ramdasias, Siklighars, Kabirpanthis, etc.).

Peasant Agitation, 1907

The Land Alienation Act saved agricultural land from passing to moneylenders, but did not solve the problem of rural indebtedness. The Punjab was visited by a series of calamities. Some districts were twice ravaged by famine, and the whole of the

province was swept by an epidemic of bubonic plague which took a toll of over four million lives. The administration remained insensitive to these disasters; instead of remitting land revenue, it continued to increase it with each new settlement[14] and inflicted heavy punishment on defaulters.

The immediate cause of unrest was the introduction of a bill affecting the newly colonized lands opened by the Chenab Canals. The bill was passed on the assumption that land was the property of the government and the farmer was a mere tenant. This was contrary to prevailing notions of peasant proprietorship. Provisions which caused the most heart-burning were those which restricted the rights of colonizers to make wills and denied them the right to cut trees on their land.[15] Provisions regulating the pattern of housing and standards of sanitation were not objectionable in themselves except for the clause which gave the administration the right to resume the grant in case of default.[16]

The bill was vigorously criticized in the Indian press and by members of the Punjab Legislative Council. Pratap Singh Ahluwalia, speaking on behalf of the Sikhs, protested that the bill sought to make the government both landlord and administrator; it enhanced the rights of the administration at the expense of the tenants and deprived them of the protection of the civil courts.[17] His objections were overruled.

While the colonization bill was agitating the minds of the people, a new settlement of Rawalpindi district[18] was made at a higher rate of assessment, and the rate on water taken from the Bari Doab Canals was increased. The districts most affected

14 In 1891, the land revenue from the Punjab amounted to £1,500,000; by 1906 this had gone up 30 per cent to £1,925,000. O'Donnell, *The Causes of Present Discontent in India*, p. 94.

15 The bill required colonizers to plant a minimum of 55 trees per square but denied them the right to cut trees without permission.

16 J. M. Douie, settlement commissioner, *PLCD*, 28 February 1907.

17 *PLCD*, 28 February 1907, pp. 13–15.

18 Land revenue from the district increased from £27,500 in 1864 to £36,400 in 1884 to £45,000 in 1904. O'Donnell, *The Causes of Present Discontent in India*, p. 101.

by these measures were Lyallpur (mainly colonized by Sikhs) and Rawalpindi.

A distressed peasantry made the Punjab fertile soil for revolutionary seed. And the seed blew in profusion from all over India—and indeed from Asia. The Punjabi rustic, who had looked upon the European as his *māī-bāp* (mother-father) divinely ordained to rule over the 'lesser breeds' of yellow and brown and black races, heard of the resounding victory of Japanese arms over the Russian. He also heard of his own countrymen's triumph in forcing the government to rescind the partition of Bengal (1905). In India the gentle politics of Dadabhai Naoroji and Ranade had given way to the radical and the revolutionary method of Tilak and the terrorists. 'Swaraj is our birthright,' proclaimed Tilak. 'If you deny us swaraj we will blow you to smithereens,' added the terrorists. It was hardly likely that the gale that was blowing across the length and breadth of Hindustan would bypass the Punjab.

Urban politicians took the lead in organizing protest meetings. The nationalist press supported their cause and in its eagerness to help enlarged the grievance against the colonization bill into a racial issue between the brown and the white man. The *Tribune* and the *Punjabi* were sued for libel by English officers; *India* and the *Hindustan* were prosecuted for sedition against the government.[19]

By March 1907 the atmosphere in the cities and the affected colonies had become tense. A new song was on the lips of the people '*pagṛī sambhāl jattā*—peasant, guard your turban.' Students of the Khalsa College, Amritsar, staged a hostile demonstration at the farewell visit of the outgoing lieutenant governor, Sir Charles Rivaz.[20] Protest meetings in bigger cities were organized by lawyers and members of the Arya Samaj.[21]

19 The *Hindustan* addressed a message 'to the native forces in British India: *Bande Mātaram, Sepoy mat bano*—Salutation to the Motherland, do not join the army.' *Civil and Military Gazette,* 28 July 1907.

20 Among the organizers of the student demonstrations was young Tara Singh, who was destined to become the dominant figure in Sikh politics.

21 A leading part was taken by Lajpat Rai, Sufi Amba Prasad, and Ajit Singh of the Bharat Mata Society, and Pindi Das, editor of *India.*

The fiftieth anniversary of the sepoy mutiny was chosen as the occasion for a province-wide protest. In some places, particularly Lyallpur, the demonstrations had to be dispersed by force. Lajpat Rai, Ajit Singh, and some lawyers who were suspected of fomenting the trouble were arrested. The first two were deported to Burma.

Despite the repression, criticism of the bill continued unabated. The authorities sensed that the measure had caused uneasiness among Sikh soldiers,[22] many of whom had relatives in the colony areas, and governor general, Lord Minto, vetoed the bill. The land tax and the water rate were reduced.[23]

The king emperor's birthday was made the excuse to proclaim an amnesty, and the Punjab leaders returned home after six months in Burma.[24]

22 Mr Morley, secretary of state for India, in a speech in Parliament, said 'In this agitation special attention, it is stated, has been paid to the Sikhs, who, as the House is aware, are among the best soldiers in India.... Special efforts have been made to secure their attendance at meetings to enlist their sympathies and to inflame their passions. So far active agitation has been virtually confined to the districts in which the Sikh element is predominant.' *Indian Debates Session, 1907*, House of Commons, 6 June 1907, p. 177.

It was the opinion of the Punjab government that of the 28 meetings organized by the agitators only five dealt with peasants' grievances; the rest were of a political nature.

23 Returns of water tax are significant. The capital of 7 million sterling invested in the Punjab canals yielded in 1906–7 a handsome net profit of 10½ per cent, whereas in the case of the Chenab Canal colonies the returns were nearly 22 per cent. It was in the Chenab colonies that the agitation was the strongest. O'Donnell, *The Causes of Present Discontent in India*, p. 98.

24 The arrested lawyers were kept in gaol for five months before being released on bail. A few days later they were acquitted by the judge, Mr Martineau, because the evidence tendered by the prosecution was 'untrustworthy and malicious'. Ibid., p. 100.

11. World War I and its Aftermath

Sikh Contribution to the War (1914–18)

Ever since the Mutiny of 1857, the Sikhs formed a very substantial portion of the British army. When war broke out, Sikh recruitment was speeded up. The number of Sikhs in the services rose from 35,000 at the beginning of 1915 to over 100,000 by the end of the war,[1] forming about a fifth of the army in action.

Recruitment from the princely states was more impressive than in British India. Over 60,000 men from Patiala (which had a total higher than the best of any British district and four times as much as that of any other Indian princely state), Jind, Kapurthala, Nabha, Faridkot, and Kalsia went to the front. The maharajahs of Patiala, Jind, and Kapurthala offered their personal services, and all the princes made generous contributions in cash and equipment.

Sikh soldiers fought on all fronts of the war in Europe, Turkey, and Africa, and did credit to their race by their bravery. Of the 22 military crosses awarded for conspicuous gallantry to Indians, the Sikhs won 14. The official chronicler of the Punjab's war effort recorded: 'It is true that in practically every part of the province the Sikhs came forward in strength and

1 M. S. Leigh, *The Punjab and the War*, p. 44.

established an all-round record which leaves little room for criticism.[2]

Aftermath of the War. Massacre of Amritsar, 13 April 1919

Because the Sikh contribution to the war both in men and material was bigger than that of any other community of India, it was not altogether surprising that they exaggerated their role in the allied victory and expected to be specially rewarded for their services. They were, consequently, pained to find that local officials and the police continued to treat them as common rustics instead of heroes. They heard for the first time the full story of the maltreatment of Sikh emigrants by Canadian and American whites and of the Ghadr rising;[3] of the infamous conspiracy trials—the hangings, deportations, and the internment in their villages of nearly 5000 of their Ghadrite co-religionists. Their fellow villagers also told them of the persecution by the authorities, of the 'Indent System' by which every village had been forced to provide a certain number of recruits,[4] and the pressure used to raise war funds.[5] Other factors added fuel

2 Ibid., pp. 107–9.

On the conclusion of hostilities, Sikh legislative councillors lauded the services of their community. Gajjan Singh said: 'My community has supplied recruits in almost every Sikh district much larger in number as compared with the sister communities of the Muhammadans and Hindus.... I am not in possession of correct figures but I believe that out of the nearly four lakh brave sons of the Punjab who went to fight the battles of the King Emperor about one-third were members of my community. We, the Sikhs are very proud of this record. If we were proud of our loyalty and devotion to government we are prouder today.' *PLCD*, 20 November 1918, pp. 387–8.

3 Discussed in Chapter 12.

4 There was extra strain on manpower requirements in the last two years of the war. It was caused by the collapse of Russia and the rising of the Mahsud, Mohmand, and Mari tribes on the north-west frontier.

5 The expression 'pressure and persuasion' was used by Lord Willingdon, governor of Bombay. Bombay police often sealed wells till the villagers paid the sum marked against them. B. G. Horniraam, *Amritsar and Our Duty to India*, p. 24.

to the smouldering fire. The summer monsoon failed; the *rabī* harvest was extremely meagre; the cost of living rose higher than ever before.[6] Urban population was further hit by the imposition of a special income tax: the increase in some cases ranged from 100 to 200 per cent.[7] To cap it all, an epidemic of influenza raged across the entire country taking a heavy toll of life. By the end of the year (1918), over 100,000 Punjabis had succumbed to the 'flu. An atmosphere of disillusionment and depression came to prevail in the province. When the people needed succour and reassurance, a balm to soothe their nerves—the government rubbed salt into their wounds.

Restrictive measures introduced during the war were not withdrawn; on the contrary, legislation of a more drastic nature was planned. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, lieutenant governor of the Punjab, scouted the notion of self-government for India as a preposterous figment of the mind of the urbanite babu and the wog barrister.[8] He prohibited nationalist leaders from entering the province and took stern measures to repress agitation against the Rowlatt[9] bills intended to combat revolutionary crime. In the Punjab, Sir Sidney Rowlatt came to be known by the sobriquet *raulā* (turmoil). The drastic changes he proposed were summed up in the slogan: *nā dalīl, nā vakīl, nā apīl* (no argument, no

6 Wheat was 47 per cent above the normal price of 1914, foreign cloth 175 per cent, Indian cloth 100 per cent, sugar 68 per cent higher than pre-war prices. German submarine warfare restricted imports; coal shortage cut down railway transport.

7 Hunter Committee Report, *Disorders Inquiry Committee Report*, p. 152.

8 'If it is clear that the demands emanate not from the mass of the people, whose interests are at stake, but from a small and not quite disinterested minority, naturally enough eager for power and place, we must, if we are faithful to our trust, place the interests of the silent masses before the clamour of the politicians however troublesome and insistent.' Sir Michael O'Dwyer quoted in the *Congress Punjab Inquiry Report 1919–20*, p. 14.

9 A Committee under Sir Sidney Rowlatt produced a report on revolutionary crime in India since 1907 and proposed a series of measures empowering the executive to override ordinary legal processes in dealing with violent political agitation.

lawyer, no appeal). Nevertheless, the bills became law in March 1919.[10]

Mahatma Gandhi, who had been leading the agitation against the Rowlatt bills, called for a complete *hartāl* (cessation of work) to mark the people's sense of resentment. There were riots and casualties caused by police firing in many cities. The Mahatma was arrested.

In the Punjab, the protests were conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner till the police precipitated matters. In Amritsar, Doctors Saifuddin Kitchlew and Satyapal, who had successfully organized a 'striking demonstration in furtherance of Hindu-Mohammedan unity' were arrested and whisked away to Dharamsala.[11] News of their deportation spread in the city, and a crowd of citizens proceeded to the deputy commissioner's bungalow to register their protest. The police stopped them en route and, in trying to disperse them, killed half a dozen people and wounded over 30.[12] The mob got out of hand and began to assault white people. It set fire to English-owned banks, a church, the offices of the Christian Religious Text Book Society, the telegraph office, and the town hall. In this riot five Englishmen were killed and an English missionary severely assaulted. The deputy commissioner's foolish action yielded a bitter harvest of racial hate.

From Jullundur, Brigadier General R. E. H. Dyer[13] arrived with troops and armoured cars. The next afternoon when he marched

10 These were the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Bill and the Criminal Law (Emergency Powers) Bill. They were introduced in February 1919 and passed within a month.

11 Hunter Committee Report, *Disorders Inquiry Committee Report*, p. 9. 'Mussalmans and Hindus have united.... I have been expecting this...there is a big show coming.' General Dyer to his son on leaving Jullundur for Amritsar. Colvin, *Life of General Dyer*, p. 163.

12 The figure of casualties in the *Congress Punjab Inquiry Report* was twenty dead and many wounded (p. 48).

13 R. E. H. Dyer (1864–1927) belonged to a well-known family of brewers, Dyer Meakin & Co., of northern India. He was schooled in Simla and later in Sandhurst. He got his commission in 1886 and served mostly in India.

his troops through the bazaars he was greeted with shouts of *Hindū-Mussalmān kī jai* and *Mahātmā Gāndhī kī jai.* In the evening he received information of vandalism: cutting of telegraph wires and tampering with fishplates on the railway track. The general proclaimed a state of emergency and declared all meetings illegal. Meanwhile the local Congress had already announced a meeting at Jallianwala Bagh for the Baisakhi fair. From the early hours of the morning, Sikhs, for whom the first of Baisakh was also the birth anniversary of the Khalsa, started arriving at the Golden Temple. Those who had come from the outlying villages and had not heard of the proclamation went to the nearby Jallianwala garden to while away the hours till it was cool enough to return home. Local Congress leaders utilized the opportunity to tell them about the occurrences of the previous day. For the Sikh villagers it was just another diversion, a *tamāsā.*

As soon as General Dyer received news of the meeting, he marched a platoon of infantry to Jallianwala. He occupied the only entrance and exit to the garden and, without giving any warning to the people to disperse, opened fire. He killed 379 and wounded over 2000. He imposed a curfew on the city and returned to his camp leaving the dying with the dead without any possibility of help reaching them. When the news was conveyed to Sir Michael O'Dwyer, he fully approved of the action.[14]

Martial law was proclaimed in Amritsar and subsequently extended to other districts: Lahore, Gujranwala, Lyallpur, and Gujarat.

Martial Law in the Punjab

Hartals and black-flag processions to protest against the Rowlatt bills had taken place in most cities of the Punjab, and in some

14 'I approved of General Dyer's action in dispersing by force the rebellious gathering and thus preventing further rebellious acts.... Speaking with perhaps a more intimate knowledge of the then situation than anyone else. I have no hesitation in saying that General Dyer's action that day was the decisive factor in crushing the rebellion, the seriousness of which is only now being generally realised.' Hunter Committee Report, *Disorders Inquiry Committee Report*, p. 48.

the police had dispersed passive resisters by opening fire on them. After Jallianwala, the demonstrations took an extremely violent form. Bridges, churches, post offices, and other public buildings were burnt; telegraph and telephone lines were cut; railway lines torn up; white men assaulted. The army took over the administration, and whatever vestiges of a civilized government had remained also vanished.

General Dyer's actions at Amritsar set the tone of 'Dyerarchy' (the word coined for lawlessness) for the rest of the province. He had the city's water and electric supply cut off. In the street where a missionary lady had been assaulted, he made Indian passers-by crawl on their bellies; people were flogged without trial; bicycles, carts, and cars 'other than those owned by Europeans' were commandeered. Lawyers were compulsorily recruited as special constables and made to patrol the streets; specially constituted courts tried nearly 300 men and summarily sentenced 51 to death and hundreds of others to terms of imprisonment.

Lahore suffered a worse fate than Amritsar. The army administrator ordered tradesmen to open their shops on pain of being shot and having their stores distributed free to the public; not more than two persons were allowed to walk abreast on the sidewalks; electric fans and other electric gadgets belonging to Indians were requisitioned for the use of British soldiers; Badshahi mosque, where meetings had taken place, was closed except for the Friday prayers; for several days flogging was carried out in public. Educated classes came in for special attention. Students of several Lahore colleges were ordered to report four times daily—in some cases four miles away from their colleges.

Kasur, where two Englishmen had been murdered, was collectively punished with fines and public flogging of suspects; an Indian who failed to *salām* a white man was made to rub his or her nose on the ground; a local poet was ordered to compose verses in praise of martial law and its administrator; gallows were erected in the market place to strike terror in the populace.

Gujranwala and its neighbouring villages were subjected to bombing and machine-gunning from the air; one of the targets successfully hit was the Khalsa High School at Gujranwala, where many people were killed and wounded.

Other places in the Punjab which suffered at the hands of martial law administrators were Wazirabad, Nizamabad, Akalgarh, Ram Nagar, Hafizabad, Sheikhupura, Chuharkana, Sangla, Moman, Manianwala, Nawanpind, Jalapur Jattan (a Sikh village), Malakwal, Lyallpur, Gojra and Chak No. 149 (colonized by Sikh Jats), and Gujarat. In the seven weeks that the Punjab was administered by martial law nearly 1200 were killed and at least 3600 wounded.[15]

The effect that Jallianwala and martial law administration had on the people of the Punjab can hardly be exaggerated. Racial tension, reminiscent of the most savage days of the mutiny when every white man looked upon the coloured as his enemy, was recreated. Even people of tried loyalty, including those who had served in the forces, were victimized. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who claimed that he had saved the empire, had in fact

15 The Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the martial law regime was subjected to the most searching enquiry by a committee appointed by the Indian National Congress headed by Mahatma Gandhi himself. The committee severely censured the lieutenant governor, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, General Dyer, and the English officers concerned. Subsequently, the government appointed its own committee for the same purpose. It was presided over by Lord Hunter and consisted of seven other members, including three Indians. The Hunter Commission was unanimous in its verdict on General Dyer's action and recommended his dismissal. On the other issues, the English and the Indian members were at variance; the latter submitted a minority report.

The matter was also debated in the British Parliament. Winston Churchill made the most scathing criticism of General Dyer's action—he described it as 'an episode which appeared to be without parallel in the modern history of the British Empire... an extraordinary event, a monstrous event, an event which stood in singular and sinister isolation.' R. Furneaux, *Massacre at Amritsar*, p. 153.

General Dyer had his supporters. The *Morning Post* raised a fund for him and he was presented with a golden sword as 'Defender of the Empire'. The general received a sum of £26,317 from his English admirers.

dealt it the most grievous blow by alienating almost all Indians, including its staunchest supporters, the Sikhs.[16]

General Dyer tried to win over the Sikhs as best he could. He summoned the manager of the Golden Temple and Sunder Singh Majithia and asked them to use their influence with the Sikhs in favour of the government. He sent out movable columns through the Sikh villages to wean them away from the influence of mischief makers and to prove that the sircār was still strong. Priests of the Golden Temple invited the general to the sacred shrine and presented him with a *siropā* (turban and kirpan).

Mahatma Gandhi later visited Jallianwala Bagh and the sites where atrocities had been committed by the army and the police. He addressed mammoth gatherings and told the people that the most important quality for a patriot was to be *nirbhai*—fearless. Under his inspiration a new organization, the Central Sikh League, consisting of nationalists who were opposed to the Chief Khalsa Diwan's toadying to the British, came into existence.

16 Sir Michael O'Dwyer was murdered by a Sikh, Udham Singh, at a public meeting in London on 13 March 1940. Udham Singh was hanged on 13 June 1940.

12. Xenophobic Marxism

Sikh Emigration to Canada and the United States

In the early years of the present century, Sikh peasants, driven by economic conditions in their home province to seek livelihood in other Asian countries, began to migrate in small numbers to Canada[1] and the United States. They found employment in laying the track of the Canadian Pacific Railways, in lumber mills, and mines. Although their wages were lower than those of the white workers, they were able to save enough to send money home and so encourage their friends and relatives to join them. By the autumn of 1906 there were over 1500 Sikh workers in or near Vancouver. During the next few years, another 5000 entered British Columbia. The immigration of large numbers of Chinese and Japanese had already created an anti-Asian feeling among Canadians; this ill-will was diverted against the Sikhs, who looked more distinctive with their turbans and long-flowing beards and were less docile than their fellow

1 The presence of Indians attracted official notice in 1904 when 258 'Hindus' (a term applied by Canadians and Americans to all Indians irrespective of their religion) were listed in the census of British Columbia. Over 90 per cent of the Indian emigrants to Canada and the United States were Sikhs—of these over 90 per cent of those who went to Canada settled in British Columbia and over 90 per cent of those who went to the United States settled in California.

Orientals.[2] In a short time Sikhs became the cynosure of Canadian eyes.[3] Assaults on Sikh workers became a feature of

2 To whip up racial prejudice, stories were spread that the Punjabis were polygamous, full of caste prejudices, unclean in their personal habits, riddled with disease (particularly trachoma), and therefore altogether unassimilable. A song which became popular at the time in British Columbia was entitled 'White Canada for Ever'.

This the voice of the West and it speaks to the world:
The rights that our fathers have given
We'll hold by right and maintain by might,
Till the foe is backward driven.
We welcome as brothers all white men still,
But the shifty yellow race,
Whose word is vain, who oppress the weak,
Must find another place.

Chorus:

Then let us stand united all
And show our father's might,
That won the home we call our own,
For white man's land we fight.
To oriental grasp and greed
We'll surrender, no never.
Our watchword be 'God save the King'
White Canada for ever.

3 In October 1906, a ship bringing a party of Indians had to be diverted to Victoria because the mayor refused to allow it to dock in Vancouver harbour. A mass meeting was held in Vancouver Town Hall on 18 October 1906, at which resolutions were passed against further immigration of Indians. Some voices were raised in protest on behalf of the Sikhs; among them was that of Henry H. Gladstone (nephew of the famous prime minister), who had served 15 years in India. Answering the charge that Indians had filthy habits, he wrote: 'The Sikhs are scrupulously clean and I regard them as a very fine race of men.' *Pacific Monthly*, Vol. 17 of 1907.

Dr S. H. Lawson, who was a ship's surgeon on the Canadian Pacific Railway steamers *Monteagle* and *Tartar*, wrote: 'It was my duty to make I a thorough physical examination of each immigrant at Hong Kong and, although at first I was strongly prejudiced against them, I lost this prejudice after thousands of them had passed through my hands and I had compared them with white steerage passengers I had seen on the Atlantic. I refer in particular to the Sikhs and I am not exaggerating in the least when I say that they were one hundred per cent cleaner in their habits and freer from

daily life in Vancouver.[4] Unemployment consequent upon a slump in the lumber trade accentuated the competition between white and coloured workers. White trade unions pressed the Federal government to exclude coloured immigrants. As a result of the measures passed, only six Indians were allowed to enter Canada in 1909.

The fact that Sikh immigrants were British subjects created legal complications. British Columbian legislation required the sanction of the Federal government; the Federal government had to consult the government of the United Kingdom, which in its turn had to watch the reaction of the Government of India. Canada's immigration policy vis-à-vis the Indians was thus formulated after prolonged negotiations between Vancouver, Ottawa, London, and Calcutta. All the governments were however agreed that British Columbians had every right to exclude Indian immigrants; their only concern was that measures should be so framed that no suspicion of racial discrimination should attach to them.[5]

From 1907 onwards, British Columbia's state legislature passed several enactments to check Indian immigration and

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disease than the European steerage passengers I had come in contact with. The Sikhs impressed me as a clean, manly, honest race. My more recent impressions as a surgeon in mining camps among thousands of white men, where immorality is rife, has increased my respect for the Sikhs.' *The Indians-Appeal to Canada*, p. 11; R. K. Das, *Hindustani Workers on the Pacific Coast*, p. 75.

4 There were anti-Asian riots in the city of Vancouver in July 1907. These were largely directed against the Chinese and Japanese and resulted in $36,000 worth of damage to property. The Sikhs escaped by discreetly remaining indoors.

5 At first an attempt was made to persuade the immigrants to leave Canada voluntarily and settle instead in British Honduras. It was believed that in view of the unemployment in British Columbia in the years 1907 and 1908 this proposal would receive favourable response. A delegation of representative Sikhs visited the Honduras, studied the conditions and recommended that their countrymen reject the proposal as the wages in the Honduras, where most of the labour was indentured, were low and the climatic conditions were unsuitable for Punjabis.

prohibit employment of Indians in certain industries. These enactments were invalidated by the courts. The Government of India was then requested to stop immigration at source.[6]

In 1908, Mr McKenzie King[7] (later prime minister of Canada) visited London and Calcutta to press the Canadian point of view. As a result the Government of India ordered shipping companies to stop advertising travel facilities and employment opportunities on the American continent and invoked the provisions of the Emigration Act 1883[8] to prevent Indians leaving for Canada. The Canadian government itself passed two orders-in-council to deal with the ingress of Indian nationals living abroad. One raised the sum of money required to be in the possession of an intending immigrant from $25 to $200; the other authorized the minister of the interior to prohibit entry of travellers unless they came 'from the country of their birth or citizenship by a continuous journey, and on through tickets purchased before leaving the country of their birth or citizenship.'[9] Both these orders were

6 Sir Wilfred Laurier, prime minister of Canada, repeated the allegation that the Indians were 'unsuited to live in the climatic conditions of British Columbia and were a serious disturbance to industrial and economic conditions in portions of the Dominions.' *Order-in-council*, 2 March 1908.

In a letter to the viceroy. Lord Minto, Sir Wilfred wrote, 'Strange to say the Hindus...are looked upon by our people in British Columbia with still more disfavour than the Chinese. They seem to be less adaptable to our ways and manners than all the other Oriental races that come to us.' April 1909, quoted by Morse in his unpublished thesis 'Immigration and Status of British East Indians in Canada,' 27.

7 In 1907 he headed the Royal Commission appointed to enquire into methods by which Oriental labour had been induced to migrate to Canada.

8 The Emigration Act XXI of 1883 was passed to safeguard the interests of indentured labour. Emigration was only allowed to countries which had passed legislation to protect the interests of emigrants and were listed in the schedule. Canada was not listed in the schedule.

9 The reactions of the Government of India (to which Sikh immigrants naturally looked for protection) to these regulations and enactments can be gauged from the correspondence between the viceroy, Lord Minto, and the Canadian premier. Lord Minto wrote: 'We have published the conditions imposed by Canada widely, with the result that emigration has ceased altogether and we consider there *is* practically no chance of its being

specifically directed against the Indians. Chinese and Japanese immigrants were exempted from the provision regarding the possession of $200; the 'continuous passage' regulation was even more pointedly aimed at the Indians as it was known that no company ran ships directly from India to Canada (a transhipment at Hong Kong, Shanghai, or some other port was necessary) and India had no ships of her own.[10]

The orders-in-council were made substantive law by amending the existing act and then incorporating all the prohibitory clauses in the Immigration Act of 1910. Discriminatory legislation compelled many hundreds of Indians to leave Canada. The Indian population in British Columbia, which had exceeded 5000 in 1908, fell to less than half in 1911.[11]

Having stopped Indian immigration, the Canadian government devised means to expel Indians who had come in before the passing of the restrictive measures. The 'continuous voyage' and

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reopened... we raised no objection to the methods adopted by Canada and we have not any intention of raising any questions regarding them.' Letter dated 1 March 1909. Morse, 'Immigration and Status of British East Indians in Canada' (unpublished thesis), pp. 40–1.

10 Mr H. H. Stevens, MP from Vancouver, who took a leading part in mobilizing Canadian opinion against Indian immigrants, admitted that the minister who drafted the order 'knew, and his government knew, that there was no steamship line direct from India to Canada and therefore this regulation would keep the Hindu out, and at the same time render the government immune from attack on the ground that they were passing regulations against the interests of Hindus who are British subjects.' *House of Commons Debates 1914*, No. 1233.

The first victims of the orders-in-council were 200 Indians (mostly Sikhs) who came to Vancouver in March 1908 on the *Monteagle*; 18 who had waited for the boat at Hong Kong were debarred because they had not come by direct passage from India; another 105 who had boarded the ship at Calcutta were turned back because they could not furnish proof that they were not impostors and were the very men who had purchased the tickets at Calcutta. Morse, 'Immigration and Status of British East Indians in Canada,' p. 36.

11 The census figure for 1911 was 2342 Hindus, of which all but 27 were in British Columbia.

the $200 clauses were invoked to prevent wives and children[12] rejoining their husbands and fathers in Canada.

The Immigration Act of 1910 came up for scrutiny before the Canadian Supreme Court in 1913. A party of 39 Indians (mostly Sikhs) had come to British Columbia by a Japanese ship, the *Panama Maru,* and succeeded in obtaining writ of habeas corpus against the Immigration Department's order of deportation.[13] Within a fortnight of the passing of the judgment, the Canadian government promulgated a new order-in-council forbidding entry of 'artisans or labourers, skilled or unskilled... at any port of British Columbia'.[14] A month later, the 'continuous passage' and the $200 clauses were reintroduced through new orders-in-council carefully worded to circumvent the verdict of the Supreme Court. The door to Canada was firmly shut with a notice printed on the outside in invisible ink reading 'Indians keep out'.

Sikh immigration to the United States was a spillover from Canada. In the three years from 1904 to 1906 about 600 Indians

12 The case of Indian wives came up early in 1912 when two Sikh residents of Vancouver, Bhag Singh and Balwant Singh (president and priest, respectively, of the Vancouver gurdwara), returned to British Columbia with their families. The men were allowed to re-enter, but their wives were ordered to be deported. Indians appealed against the order, but before the Supreme Court could pronounce on the case, the Immigration Department allowed the women and children in question to remain in Canada, 'as an act of Grace, without establishing a precedent.' *House of Commons Debates 1912,* No. 2457.

13 In *Re. Narain Singh* et al., No. 18 British Columbia Law Reports 1913. Shortly before Chief Justice Hunter delivered his judgment in favour of the Indians, the Immigration Department—perhaps to forestall the results of a pending appeal—ignored the writ of habeas corpus granted temporarily by a judge of the Supreme Court to one Bhagwar Singh Gyani, the leader of Sikh settlers on the Chinese coast, and deported him.

14 PC 23624 of 1914 and PC 2642 of 1913. Only Orientals entered Canada through British Columbia. Of the Orientals, the Japanese were exempted by virtue of a 'gentleman's agreement' with their government; and the act was not invoked in the case of the Chinese. Thus the Canadian government again succeeded in discriminating against the Indians without having to use the word.

(mainly Sikhs) crossed over into the United States. As the Canadian Immigration Department became stricter, the number of immigrants to the States increased.[15] Immigrants found employment as farmhands and lumberjacks in Washington, Oregon, and California. Small communities of Sikhs grew up in the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys. Some went further south to the Imperial Valley, where the climate was similar to that in the Punjab. On receiving favourable accounts of conditions in the States, other Sikhs began to go directly to California. American whites, however, reacted even more violently than the Canadians. In 1908 a body known as the Asiatic Exclusion League organized pogroms against Orientals. For the next two years few Indians were able to enter the States. When there was a lull in these race riots, immigration started again and by the end of 1910 there were nearly 6000 Indians in California. Once again racial hatred was whipped up by the local press against the 'turbaned tide' and the 'ragheads'. The United States Immigration Department did not bother with legal niceties; it turned back Indians for one or the other of three reasons: 'liable to public charge,' 'suffering from dangerous contagious disease,' or 'violates alien contract labour law'.[16] Thus the doors of the United States were also slammed in the face of the Sikh immigrants, and those who had succeeded in entering had to face constant harassment from the police and white racists.

Founding of the Ghadr Party

Since the vast majority of Indian immigrants were Sikhs, the earliest immigrant organizations centred on Sikh gurdwaras. In 1907 the Khalsa Diwan Society was organized in Vancouver with branches at Victoria, Abbotsford, New Westminster, Fraser Mills, Duncan Coombs, and Ocean Falls. This Society built a

15 1072 in 1907 and 1710 in 1908. *Report of the Commission General for Immigration 1919–20,* 181–2; quoted by R. K. Das in *Hindustani Workers on the Pacific Coast.*

16 *Pacific Monthly,* Vol. 17 of 1907, p. 584.

gurdwara in Vancouver in 1909. Three years later another temple was erected in Victoria and, somewhat later, smaller ones in other towns. The Khalsa Diwan Society of the United States built a gurdwara at Stockton. Although the objects of the Diwan were religious, educational, and philanthropic, problems connected with immigration and incidents of racial discrimination began to loom large in its proceedings.

Alongside the purely Sikh Diwan, there grew other Indian societies to safeguard the economic interests of Indian workers and to fight cases against immigration authorities. The United India League operated in Vancouver; the Hindustani Association of the Pacific Coast was set up in Astoria. Since the only public places where Indians could meet were the gurdwaras, they became storm centres of political activity. The Sikh Diwan and other organizations began to publish tabloid papers in Gurmukhi, Urdu, and English.[17]

A large number of Sikh immigrants were ex-soldiers or policemen to whom loyalty to the British Crown was an article of faith. It was only after they had failed to get any response from Buckingham Palace and the Viceregal Lodge that the words *gorā* (white man) and *gore śāhī* (white man's lawlessness) acquired a pejorative connotation and they began to lend ear to more radical counsel given by men such as Lajpat Rai, who visited them in Canada and the United States. New leaders came to the

17 None of these journals had a very long life. The first venture in this line is said to have been started by a Bengali, Tarak Nath Das, and ended on the editor's deportation a few months later. Copies of the following journals are in the library of Berkeley University: *Deś Sewak* published in Gurmukhi and Urdu by Harnam Singh and Guru Datt Kumar from Vancouver; *Khālsā Herald*, a Gurmukhi monthly started in 1911 in Vancouver by Kartar Singh Akali; *Aryan*, an English journal edited by Dr Sunder Singh with the help of Quakers; *Saṅsār* (1912), edited by Kartar Singh Akali, was later merged with the *Aryan; Hindustani* (1914), an English journal edited by Seth Hussain Rahim. Dr Sunder Singh later edited *Canada and India* from Toronto which continued appearing till 1917. Kartar Singh Akali also shifted to Toronto and for some years edited *The Theosophical News*.

The author was unable to find any journals published by the Indian immigrants in the United States except the *Ghadr*.

fore. In California, Hardayal of Delhi,[18] who was a lecturer in Stanford University, became for a short while the political mentor of the immigrants. A dual leadership grew up: effective control remained in the hands of the largely illiterate Sikh workers.[19] Since the immigrants had to deal with lawyers and government departments, they had to have spokesmen who could speak English.[20] Friction between Hindu 'intelligentsia' and Sikh workers was inevitable. The Sikhs looked down upon the Hindus as English-speaking babus who did not have the courage of their convictions. The Hindus treated the Sikhs with the contempt with which lawyers generally treat their rustic clientele.

Jwala Singh and Hardayal took the initiative in organizing the immigrants at Stockton and set up a body entitled the Hindustani Workers of the Pacific Coast. Sohan Singh Bhakna, (b. 1870) who was then working in a lumber mill at Oregon, and Hardayal were elected president and secretary, respectively. (Jwala Singh remained behind the scene but provided most of the funds, including scholarships of Indian students.) The party bought premises in San Francisco and began publishing a weekly paper called *Ghadr* (revolution) in Urdu and later many other Indian languages—the largest issue being in Gurmukhi. Thereafter the organization came to be known as the Ghadr party. The first issue of the paper stated the objective of the party in the following terms:

'Today, there begins in foreign lands, but in our country's language, a war against the British Raj...What is our name?

18 Hardayal (1884–1938) belonged to a Kayastha family of Delhi. He possessed a phenomenal memory and broke many university examination records. He came to be known as the 'Great Hardayal'. His book, *Hints on Self Culture,* does not betray any signs of genius. He was also eccentric in his political views. After the First World War he lived in Sweden, taught Indian philosophy at Upsala, and published an apology for British rule in India.

19 Represented in British Columbia by men such as Bhag Singh; in California by Jwala Singh (a prosperous rancher of Stockton known as the 'potato king'), Santokh Singh, Sohan Singh Bhakna, and Bhagwan Singh Gyani.

20 In British Columbia they sought guidance from Tarak Nath Das and Chagan Lal Verma alias Seth Hussain Rahim; in California from Hardayal.

Ghadr. What is our work? Ghadr. Where will Ghadr break out? In India. The time will soon come when rifles and blood will take the place of pen and ink.'[21]

Beneath the name of the paper on the front page was the legend: 'Enemy of the British Government'. This was further elucidated in the third issue of the journal, which dealt with the impending war in Europe: 'The Germans have great sympathy with our movement for liberty because they and ourselves have a common enemy (the English). In the future Germany can draw assistance from us and they can render us great assistance also.'[22]

Within a few months, the *Ghadr* began to circulate among Indian settlers in Canada, Japan, the Philippines, Hong Kong, China, the Malaya States, Singapore, British Guiana, Trinidad, the Honduras, south and east Africa, and other countries where there were Indian communities. Thousands of copies were also sent to India.[23] Then took place an incident which drew the

21 *Ghadr*, 1 November 1913.

22 Ibid., 15 November 1913.

23 Many articles and poems from the *Ghadr* were reprinted in booklets, of which four became very popular, viz. (i) *Ghadr-dī-Gūnj* (Echoes of the Mutiny), (2) *Ilān-i-Jaṅg* (Declaration of War), (3) *Nayā Zamānā* (the New Age), and (4) *The Balance Sheet of British Rule in India.*

The following extracts are from *Ghadr-dī-Gūnj.*

No pundits or mullahs do we need,
No prayers or litanies we need recite.
These will only scuttle our boat.
Draw the sword; 'tis time to fight.
(Vol. 1, No. 4)

Though Hindus, Mussalmans and Sikhs we be,
Sons of Bharat are we still,
Put aside our arguments for another day,
Call of the hour is to kill.
(Vol. 1. No. 23)

Some worship the cow; others, swine abhor,
The white man eats them at every place:
Forget you are Hindu, forget you are Mussalman,
Pledge yourselves to your land and race.
(Vol. 1, No. 17)

attention of the world to the plight of Indian immigrants in Canada; this was the arrival of the *Komagata Maru* in Canadian waters.

The Komagata Maru

On the morning of 23 May 1914, a Japanese passenger ship, the *Komagata Maru,* dropped anchor in the Burrard inlet—a narrow arm of the sea between the mountains and the city of Vancouver, Aboard the vessel were 376 Indians, of whom all but 30 were Sikhs. Their leader was one Gurdit Singh, who had a prosperous business at Singapore. Gurdit Singh had chartered the vessel for six months and collected his passengers from India and ports en route; Hong Kong, Shanghai, Kobe, and Yokohama.

The progress of the *Komagata Maru* was reported in British Columbian papers as a 'mounting Oriental invasion'. When the ship arrived in Canadian waters, it was cordoned off and only 22 men who could prove their Canadian domicile were allowed to land. The rest were told to go back. Pressure was brought to bear upon Gurdit Singh to pay the charter dues immediately or suffer the ship to be impounded or forcibly returned to Hong Kong. Gurdit Singh's protests that he could only pay the money after he had fulfilled his contract with the passengers by getting them into Canada and had sold the cargo which he had on board were ignored.

Sikh labourers in Canada raised $22,000 to pay for the charter. They appealed to the Canadian people and government for justice, sent telegrams to the king, the Duke of Connaught, the viceroy, and Indian leaders in India and England. There were public meetings in several cities of the Punjab to express sympathy with the passengers of the *Komagata Maru.* Mrs Annie Besant took up the cause in the British press.[24] Little notice was

24 The reaction of *The Times* (London) was typical. In a leader (4 June 1914): 'Phrases like British citizenship cannot be used as a talisman to open doors...sophistry and catch logic, the spinning of words or the reading of many books will not help her (India). And she is likely to get little profit out of enterprises like that which has sent the *Komagata Maru* to hurl its shipload of hundreds at the door of Canada.'

taken, however, of this agitation by the British, Indian,[25] or Canadian governments. The prime minister of British Columbia, Sir Richard MacBride, stated categorically: 'To admit Orientals in large numbers would mean in the end the extinction of the white peoples and we have always in mind the necessity of keeping this a white man's country.'[26]

The 'Shore Committee' of Vancouver Sikhs took the case of the *Komagata Maru* to court. A full bench of the Supreme Court decided that the new orders-in-council barred judicial tribunals from interfering with the decisions of the Immigration Department.[27] The passengers took over control of the ship from the Japanese crew and refused to leave until a cruiser threatened to fire on them. After two months of Canadian hospitality, the *Komagata Maru* slipped out into the Pacific.[28]

In a leader, on 9 July 1914, '*The Times* said: "East is East and West is West," and though we may hesitate to accept as inevitable the corollary that "never the twain shall meet"; it would be futile to deny the immediate difference between them.'

25 Lord Hardinge's subsequent statements show clearly that he was out of sympathy with the Indian immigrants. In a speech to his council on 8 September 1914, he said that the voyage of the *Komagata Maru* had been undertaken without the cognizance or approval of the Indian government and was in contravention of Canada's immigration laws. He spoke of the generosity of the Canadians in supplying the *Komagata Maru* with 4000 dollars worth of provisions and summed up his own attitude in the following words: 'The development of this incident was watched by the Government of India with the closest attention; but that as the question at issue was of a purely legal character, there was no occasion for intervention.' *Gazette of India*, 19 September 1914, p. 973.

26 *The Times*, London, 23 May 1914.

27 In *Re. Munshi Singh* No. 20, 1914. British Columbia Law Reports (p. 245) decided on 7 July 1914.

28 In Vancouver, a trail of violence followed the departure of the *Komagata Maru*. The Immigration Department had engaged the services of a Eurasian policeman, William Hopkinson, to break up the Ghadr organization. Hopkinson's chief aide was one Bela Singh. Two of Bela Singh's henchmen were found murdered. At the post-funeral service of these murdered men in the gurdwara, Bela Singh killed two and wounded six other men. William Hopkinson volunteered to appear as a witness for the defence in the trial of Bela Singh. On 21 October 1914, Hopkinson was

The travails of the *Komagata Maru* were not yet over. None of her passengers was allowed to land at Hong Kong or Singapore (where several had their homes). The boat finally arrived at the mouth of the Hoogly and docked at Budge Budge harbour. It was searched by the police, but no arms were found.[29] War had broken out while the *Komagata Maru* was still at sea, and the government had empowered itself with the right to restrict the liberty of returning emigrants. The passengers were ordered to board a train which was to take them to the Punjab. The Sikhs refused to obey[30] and left the ship in a procession, carrying the

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shot and killed by Mewa Singh, the priest of a gurdwara. Mewa Singh was sentenced to death. Prior to his execution he made a confessional statement which ran: 'My religion does not teach me to bear enmity with anybody, no matter what class, creed or order he belongs to, nor had I any enmity with Hopkinson. I heard that he was oppressing my poor people very much... I—being a staunch Sikh—could no longer bear to see the wrong done both to my innocent countrymen and the Dominion of Canada.... And, I, performing the duty of a true Sikh and remembering the name of God, will proceed towards the scaffold with the same amount of pleasure as the hungry babe does towards its mother. I shall gladly have the rope put around my neck thinking it to be a rosary of God's name....'

Mewa Singh was hanged on 11 January 1915. The anniversary of Mewa Singh's martyrdom is celebrated every year by the Sikhs of Canada and the USA.

29 This fact is important in view of the charge subsequently made by the police that the Sikhs of the *Komagata Maru* used firearms. A secret report prepared by senior CID officers, Messrs F. C. Isemonger and Slattery states: 'While there was no obstruction to the search of baggage it was impossible on the crowded ship to make this thorough.' *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy,* p. 81.

Gurdit Singh himself writes 'all the illegitimate things with the passengers were either thrown overboard in the sea or restored to the Japanese.... The deck passengers were thoroughly searched.... Thank Heaven that nothing incriminating in the eyes of the Lord was found on us.' Gurdit Singh, *Voyage of the Komagata Maru,* Part II, pp. 31–4.

30 Gurdit Singh explained to the police officers who served them with the notice that his dispute with the steamship company had to be settled by arbitration at Calcutta; that the cargo on the *Komagata Maru,* which was his property, had to be disposed of; that he had still to recover $25,000 from the passengers who expected to get the money from friends and

Granth in their midst. The police and a unit of the army barred their progress. A fracas ensued: the police opened fire, killing 18 men and wounding another 25.[31] Gurdit Singh and 28 of his companions escaped. The rest were rounded up and sent to the Punjab, where over 200 of them were interned under the Ingress Ordinance.

'Revolution' in the Punjab

Leaders of the Ghadr party had prepared themselves for the war in Europe. Since Canada was a part of the British empire, they decided to shift their revolutionary activities to the United States. A week after war was declared, a mass meeting of Indians took place at Sacramento. Several thousand men volunteered for terrorist work in India, and funds were collected to pay for their passage; there was a rush to catch boats leaving for India.[32] At this critical juncture, the Ghadr party was deprived of its leaders. Jwala Singh and Sohan Singh Bhakna enlisted for revolutionary service in India; Hardayal, who had been arrested earlier on a charge of anarchy, jumped bail and escaped to Switzerland. In their absence the control of the party in California fell to Ram Chandra, a Brahmin from Peshawar.

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relatives in Calcutta; that the men who had spent nearly six months on board wanted time to settle their accounts with each other; and that most of the passengers wished to stay in Calcutta, where they could get employment, rather than return to their villages where they had now no land or tenements. Ibid., Part II, pp. 40–3.

31 A Commission of Enquiry appointed by the government exonerated the police and put the blame squarely on the passengers of the *Komagata Maru*. The commission consisted of three Englishmen and two Indians, Sir Bijoy Chand, the maharajah of Burdwan, who had already earned notoriety for his contemptuous remarks about Indian nationalists and Daljit Singh of Kapurthala. Daljit Singh was subsequently knighted for his 'services'.

32 The *Portland Telegram* of Oregon had the following caption in its issue of 7 August 1914: 'Hindus go home to fight in Revolution.'

Astoria (Oregon) 7 August 1914: 'Every train and boat for the south carries a large number of Hindus from this city, and if the exodus keeps up much longer, Astoria will be entirely deserted by the East Indians.'

The first band of revolutionaries, led by Jwala Singh, sailed from San Francisco in August 1914 by the *Korea*. Ram Chandra addressed them in the following words:

'Your duty is clear. Go to India. Stir up rebellion in every corner of the country. Rob the wealthy and show mercy to the poor. In this way gain universal sympathy. Arms will be provided for you on arrival in India. Failing this, you must ransack the police stations for rifles. Obey without hesitation the commands of your leaders.'[33]

At Canton, another 90 volunteers joined the *Korea*. British intelligence received information of the Ghadrites' plans, and, as soon as the *Korea* docked at Calcutta, the ring leaders including Jwala Singh were arrested. Those who were able to evade police surveillance returned peacefully to their villages.

Ghadrites continued to come in batches from Canada, the United States, Hong Kong, Shanghai, China, Straits Settlements, Borneo, Japan, and the Philippines. On their way to India, they approached Indian troops posted abroad: at Hong Kong, contact was made with the 26th Punjabis; at Singapore, with the Malaya State Guides and the 5th Light Infantry; at Penang, with a unit of Sikh sepoys.

Amongst the fleet of Japanese ships which brought the Ghadrites to India, the more important were the *Tosa Maru*, which arrived in Calcutta late in October, and the *Mishima Maru*, which docked in Colombo. The *Tosa Maru* was searched by the police, four of the leaders were arrested, and 179 passengers sent to the Punjab under police escort.

The Indian police did not forestall the possibility of the revolutionaries coming from southern ports; many were thus able to reach the Punjab. It was estimated that, by the beginning of December 1914, nearly 1000 Ghadrites had come to India. The 'Ingress into India Ordinance' (promulgated on 5 September) empowered local authorities to detain returning emigrants.

33 The testimony of approver, Nawab Khan. Isemonger and Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy*.

The Defence of India Act, passed on 19 March 1915, authorized the governor general to frame rules 'to empower any civil or military authority to prohibit the entry or residence in any area of a person suspected to be acting in a manner prejudicial to the public safety, or to direct the residence of such person in any specified area.' The act was brought into force in 16 out of 23 districts of the Punjab to restrict the movements of suspicious characters.

The Ghadrites discovered to their chagrin that the atmosphere in India was far from conducive to revolution.[34] Leaders of the National Congress were sympathetic to the British cause. Mahatma Gandhi had volunteered for medical service, and even radicals such as B. G. Tilak expressed strong disapproval of those who wished to exploit the situation. The Punjab was sending the flower of its manhood to the front. The one significant Sikh political party, the Chief Khalsa Diwan, had reiterated its loyalty to the crown, and priests of several important Sikh shrines, denounced the Ghadrites as renegades or thugs.[35]

The Ghadrites made desperate efforts to secure a footing amongst the peasantry. They went to religious festivals at Amritsar, Nankana Sahib, and Tarn Taran and openly exhorted the people to rise. There was little response, and the revolutionaries had to fall back on their own resources. They held meeting and made plans to raid arsenals and government treasuries, but all they succeeded in doing by the end of 1914 was to com-

34 When the emigrants began to arrive back in September 1914, they expected to find the Punjab, if not ready for a revolution, at least in a state of uneasiness and it is certain that in this respect, as in the matter of arms, they suffered a disappointment. The vast majority of the people were thoroughly loyal and contented, though of course, somewhat perturbed over the European war which had broken out in the previous month.' Isemonger and Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy*.

35 'The peasantry saw nothing justifiable in these acts [i.e. acts of violence committed by the Ghadrites].... To them the revolutionaries became murderers and plunderers of honest men, the more dangerous for their organisation and arms but to be resisted by all means possible and captured.' Ibid.

mit a few dacoities and kill a police constable and a village official.[36]

Early in 1915, Ghadrites made contacts with terrorist organizations in other parts of the country. In January, Rash Bihari Bose (leader of the group which tried to assassinate Lord Hardinge in 1912) arrived in the Punjab and took over the general direction of the revolution. Bose pinned his hopes on the defection of the men of the 23rd Cavalry at Lahore and 26th Punjabis at Ferozepur, some of whom had agreed to mutiny; the response of the 28th Pioneers and the 12th Cavalry at Meerut was also encouraging. Bose sent out his agents to other cantonments: Ambala, Agra, Kanpur, Allahabad, Benares, Fyzabad, Lucknow, Multari, Jhelum, Kohat, Rawalpindi, Mardan, and Peshawar. On receiving favourable reports, he fixed the night of 21 February 1915, for a general rising of the Indian troops. Factories to manufacture bombs were set up at Amritsar, Jhabewal (near Ludhiana), and Lohatbadi. The revolutionaries were supplied with instruments to cut telegraph wires and derail railway trains. Tricolour national flags were made, and more copies of the *Ilan-i-Jang* (declaration of war) were cyclostyled for distribution.

These carefully laid plans were foiled by the police, who succeeded in extracting information from one of the captured revolutionaries. Bose advanced the date of the rising from the 21st to the 19th of February. Information of the change was also

36 The following revolutionary crimes were listed in the Rowlatt Committee Report, *Sedition Committee Report*, pp. 104–6.

1. 16 October 1914. Attack on Chauki-Man railway station on the Ferozepur-Ludhiana line.
2. 27 November 1914. Attempt to loot the Moga sub-divisional treasury in Ferozepur district resulting in the death of a police sub-inspector and village zaildar. (Two revolutionaries were killed and seven captured.)
3. 17 December 1914. Robbing of a moneylender's house in village Pipli (Ambala district).
4. 24 and 25 December 1914. Dacoities in villages Pharala and Karnama (Jullundur district).
5. 24 and 25 December 1914. Robberies in Ferozepur District.

conveyed to the police by a spy who had wormed his way into Bose's inner council. Disaffected regiments were disarmed; suspects were court-martialled and executed. The revolutionaries waited in vain for the troops to come out; then they too dispersed—only to walk into the net the police had spread for them. Rash Bihari Bose left the Punjab in disgust.

By the summer of 1915, the Ghadr uprising had been virtually smashed. A few desperate characters who remained at large turned their wrath on informers, crown witnesses, and men who were actively cooperating with the police to hunt down the revolutionaries. By the autumn even these had been apprehended or frightened into inactivity.[37]

Another plot which came to nothing was hatched in Mandi state. Six men were arrested, tried, and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.[38]

Rising at Singapore

Ghadrites returning from the States and Canada made contact with the 5th Light Infantry (the 'loyal Fifth'), a Muslim unit posted at Singapore.[39] On the afternoon of 15 February 1915, men of the 5th Light Infantry overpowered the local reservists who were on guard duty at the military prison, released German

37 'By August 1915, that is within nine months of the first outbreak, we had crushed the Ghadr rebellion. Nearly all the leaders and many of their most active adherents were in our hands awaiting trial or were brought to justice later, internal order was restored and, above all, the Sikh community had again proved its staunch loyalty.' Sir Michael O'Dwyer, *India as I Knew It*, p. 206. The last sentence refers to the committees of loyal Sikhs who helped the government against the revolutionaries.

38 Mandi conspiracy case. See index of Isemonger and Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy*.

39 There is no documentary evidence of a connection between the Ghadr party and the Singapore rising, but there is little doubt that the Ghadrites, particularly one Jagat Singh, had been working among the troops. The man who influenced the Muslims of the 5th Light Infantry was a well-to-do businessman, Kassim Mansoor, who was later court-martialled and shot. Unpublished thesis by R. W. Mosbergen, 'The Sepoy Rebellion'.

sailors from the coal tug attached to the *Emden,* and took possession of the fort. The mutineers, estimated to be over 700 men, then marched towards the town, hoping to rouse the populace. On their way, a party clashed with the Sikhs of the Malaya State Guides and Sikh sentries guarding the local gaol. This gave the rising a communal colour—Sikh versus Muslim. The mutiny was quelled by the joint efforts of the local militia, the police, and the arrival of the British sloop *Cadmus.* In the 48 hours of fighting 44 were killed, of whom eight were senior British officials. There is no record of the number of the mutineers' casualties, but later 126 men were tried by summary court-martial: 37 men were sentenced to death, 41 to transportation for life, and others to varying terms of imprisonment. The condemned men were publicly executed at Singapore.[40]

German Participation in the Ghadr

Indian revolutionaries had active propaganda centres in London, Paris, and Berlin for at least a decade before the formation of the Ghadr party. As tension in Europe grew and it became obvious that war would be between Germany on one side and Great Britain and France on the other, Indian revolutionaries shifted their activities from London and Paris to Berlin. In the spring of 1914, Hardayal arrived in Germany and apprised his countrymen of the Ghadr organization, which had by then nearly 10,000 active members. The 'Berlin-India' Committee approached the German government and succeeded in persuading the foreign minister, Zimmerman, to send instructions to his ambassador in the United States to provide arms to the Ghadrites and place funds at their disposal. German consuls general in San Francisco, Shanghai, and Bangkok were also instructed to help the revolutionaries.

German participation created factions in the Ghadr party. The rank and file constituted by the Sikh workers and peasants was without a spokesman of its own. Ram Chandra, who had little rapport with the Sikhs, had acquired overall control of the party.

40 Ibid.

The nominee of the 'Berlin-India Committee,' Haramba Lal Gupta, had German money in his pocket. Misunderstandings arose between the rival Indian groups and between the Indians and the Germans.

The first attempt to smuggle arms from the United States into India came to nought. Five thousand revolvers were put on board a chartered ship, the *Henry S.* The ship and the crew were captured by the British navy. After the failure of the *Henry S,* Haramba Lal Gupta went to Japan to try and buy arms. British intelligence alerted the Japanese government, and Gupta had to spend several months in hiding; he returned to the United States without achieving anything.

While Gupta was in Japan, another attempt was made to send arms to India. In March 1915, the *Annie Larsen,* loaded with war material, put out to sea. A few days later, a tanker, the *Maverick,* with five Ghadrites on board dressed as waiters left America. The ships were due to meet at sea, where the *Maverick* was to take over the arms and ammunition submerged in oil tanks and deliver them to the revolutionaries at some remote spot in the Sunderbans in east Bengal. The rendezvous never took place. The *Maverick* was searched by British and American warships, and the revolutionaries had to burn Ghadr literature to avoid detection. The tanker was interned by the Dutch navy and, after being released by the Dutch, captured by the British. The *Annie Larsen* was captured by the United States navy and impounded for carrying contraband.

The Germans had planned to send five other ships with arms to India, but the fate of the *Henry S,* the *Annie Larsen,* the *Maverick,* and the quarrels between Indians dampened their enthusiasm for the Ghadr organization. Their worst experience was however yet to come. In February 1916 the 'Berlin-India' Committee, with the approval of the German foreign office, sent out a Bengali, Dr Chandra Kant Chakravarty, to take over the conduct of the Ghadr movement and furnished him with large sums of money.

Chakravarty appropriated the money for his own use, and fed the Germans with imaginary reports of the work he was doing.

When the Germans discovered the truth, they washed their hands of the Ghadr party and became insulting in their behaviour towards Indians. Ghadrite plans to celebrate 1917, which was the diamond jubilee year of the 1857 Mutiny, as the year of victory were frustrated.

The bickerings between Ghadrites increased. Chakravarty made away with most of the money given by the Germans. Ram Chandra and his friends had control of the donations made by the immigrants, the party journal, and the headquarters. The rank and file, who had staked everything including their lives, were left with nothing. The have-not group was entirely Sikh; the other almost entirely Hindu. Thus religious differences further accentuated the rift.

On 6 April 1917, the United States entered the war. At the insistence of the British government, the United States police arrested 17 Indian revolutionaries along with 18 Germans of the consulate service and charged them with violating the neutrality of the United States government.[41] All the accused save one were found guilty and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment and fines. The trial ended on a dramatic note. On the last day one of the accused whipped out a revolver and shot Ram Chandra. The assailant was in turn shot by the marshal of the court and killed instantaneously.[42]

41 *U.S.A. Vs. Franz Bopp and others* before Judge W. C. Van Fleet was one of the longest and most expensive trials m the history of the United States. It lasted five months: witnesses were summoned from all parts of the world. The estimated cost was about 3 million dollars. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 April 1918.

42 This murder continued to be a cause of friction between Ghadrite factions for many years. The *San Francisco Chronicle* (24.4.1918) gave the following version of the crime: 'The motive for Singh's deed is clear. According to the Hindus of Bhagrvan Singh faction, Ram Singh (the killer of Ram Chandra) formerly owned hundreds of acres of land in Canada and was accounted a rich man. He had given thousands of dollars to the Hindoo cause—thousands of dollars which were turned over to Ram Chandra. In private conversations, the Bhagwan Singh faction freely called Ram Chandra a grafter and has pointed to the many thousands of dollars given to the cause by Ram Singh. Most of this money, according to the Hindoos, was

The British Defence of India Act of 1915 empowered provincial governments to set up tribunals which could dispense with the usual committal proceedings and whose verdict was final. Special tribunals consisting of three judges (of whom two were invariably English) were set up to try the Ghadrites. In a series of trials held at Lahore, Mandi, Benares, and as far away as Mandalay and Singapore, several hundreds of revolutionaries were tried and convicted. Of those tried in the Punjab, 46 were hanged and 194 sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.[43] Besides these, many soldiers were court-martialled and shot.

The Ghadr rebellion failed for a variety of reasons: lack of arms; lack of experience; bad leadership; the inability of the revolutionaries to keep secrets;[44] tension between the Germans and the Ghadrites; the efficiency of the British intelligence service, which planted spies in the highest councils of the revolutionaries; the stern measures taken by the Government of India; the brutal methods adopted by the Punjab police, which compelled many of the leaders to inform against their colleagues. Above all, it failed because the Punjabi masses were not ready for it. Rich landowners assured the governor of their loyalty and set up committees in the districts to watch the movements of returning emigrants and to bring them back to the path of obedience and loyalty. Even the peasants were more concerned with the war than with the revolution. The story

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"retained" by Ram Chandra for his personal use.' This version is also supported by the *Un-American Activities, Seventh Report.* Lajpat Raj wrote: 'Most of the Bengali revolutionaries I found absolutely unprincipled both in the conduct of their campaign and in the obtaining and spending of funds.... Amongst the Punjabis the worst cases were of Ram Chandra and Harish Chandra. The Sikhs on the whole proved to be purer, more unselfish and disciplined. The worst possible case among them was Bhagwan Singh Gyani's but even he was infinitely superior to Ram Chandra or Chakravarty or Gupta.' *Autobiographical Writings,* p. 218. Ram Chandra's name is, however, officially listed by the Indian National Congress as one of the heroes of the revolution.

43 See Appendix to Isemonger and Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy.*

44 'Isemonger and Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy.*

of the heroic stand made by a Sikh battalion against an overwhelming Turkish force at Gallipoli fired the Sikh youth more than the stones of racial discrimination in Canada and the United States.[45]

The Ghadr party aimed to drive out the English from India; but no Englishman lost his life at the hands of the Ghadrites, nor at the time did it pose a very serious threat to the British Raj. Nevertheless, the movement is of considerable importance to the historian. It was the first secular movement which aimed to liberate India by the use of arms. Both in Maharashtra and Bengal, political terrorism was closely connected with the revival of Hinduism: in Maharashtra, with the cult of Sivaji; in Bengal with that of the goddess Kali. And both the Maharashtrians and Bengalis rigorously excluded Muslims from their ranks. Though the vast majority of the Ghadr party was Sikh (and therefore its literature was printed in Gurmukhi and its meetings held in gurdwaras), it had nothing whatsoever to do with the revival of Sikhism. The Ghadr party attracted Hindus and Muslims to its fold and later influenced other revolutionary groups in the country to shed their religious bias.

The eruption of the Ghadr movement brought about a radical change in the political outlook of the Sikh community. It marked the beginning of the end of three quarters of a century of unquestioned loyalty to the British Raj. Though the rebellion was suppressed and submerged in the enthusiasm generated by the war, it continued to ferment and erupted a few years later during the Akali agitation: Akali terrorists known as the *Babbars* were largely recruited from the ranks of the Ghadr party.

45 'After that [the stand made by a battalion of the 14th Sikhs on 4 June 1915] the rush to the colours in the Sikh districts was extraordinary.' wrote Sir Michael O'Dwyer. 'In the four years of war the Sikhs who form a total population of two and a half millions—less than 1 per cent of British India—furnished no less than ninety thousand combatant recruits [the number was larger; Leigh, p. 44] or one-eighth of India's total. In fact, so enthusiastic was their response, so gallant were their deeds, and so generous the rewards and appreciation, that many of them have got the idea in their heads that "we won the war."' O'Dwyer, *India as I Knew It*, p. 207.

The conversion of the Ghadr party from xenophobic nationalism to communism came after the war. In 1924 Bolshevik agents working through an American communist, Agnes Smedley, made contacts with the Ghadr organization in the United States and Canada. In 1925 a batch of Ghadrites was sent to Russia, where they received instruction at the Lenin Institute and the Eastern University. Two years later this batch was sent to India via Afghanistan. By then many other Ghadrites in India (now known as *Bābās*—venerables) were out of gaol and had renewed association with their erstwhile colleagues. They received funds from British Columbia and California for the relief of political sufferers. These funds were disbursed by the *Deś Bhagat Parivār Sahāyak Sabhā* (committee for the relief of families of patriots). Muscovite Ghadrites joined hands with the *Bābās*, a paper known as *Kirtī* (worker) was started, and in 1926 the party came to be known as the *Kirtī Kisān* (workers and peasants) party; its publications bore the title: 'Official organ of the Punjab branch of the Communist Party, affiliated to the Third International.'[46] For some years the Kirtis' chief protagonist was Teja Singh Swatantra.[47] The Kirtis and the 'official' Communist party of the Punjab led by Sohan Singh Josh[48] maintained a united front. With

46 Dr J. S. Bains in the *Spokesman*, 9 February 1955; also Tilak Raj Chaddha in *Thought*, 14 June 1952.

47 Teja Singh Swatantra (b.1901), a Jat Sikh of village Aluna (Gurdaspur district), was active in the Akali and Congress movements. He spent five years in a military college in Turkey, and then made contacts with Ghadrites in California in 1929. He was externed by the US government in 1931. Swatantra spent two years in Soviet Russia before returning to India. He was arrested in 1936 and spent the next 6 years in gaol. While in gaol he was returned unopposed to the Punjab Assembly in 1937. On his release in 1942, Swatantra was elected president of the provincial Kisan Sabha and joint secretary of the provincial executive of the Communist party of India. He was expelled from the official party and set up his *lāl* (red) Communist group in 1947. He was said to be involved in cases of dacoity and murder and absconded for many years. He reappeared in the winter of 1962 but no charges were ever brought against him.

48 Sohan Singh Josh (b.1898), a Jat Sikh of village Chetanpur (Amritsar district), worked in a textile mill and the censors' office before joining the

funds liberally supplied by Moscow and Canadian-American Ghadrites, they were able to spread their influence amongst the Sikh peasantry of central Punjab.

Communist infiltration split the Ghadr party. The majority of Ghadrites in the United States and Canada either turned anti-communist or were submerged by the wave of anti-communism which spread across the western world. Their quarrels often led to violence, and at one time over two dozen murders of 'Hindus' by 'Hindus' were recorded as untraced in the state of California.[49] The bickerings continued through the years till the independence of India. In 1948 the assets of the party were turned over to the Indian ambassador in the United States, thus bringing to an end its 30 year-old turbulent career.

Akali movement. He was secretary of the Akali Dal in 1922 and was gaoled in the Akali conspiracy case from 1925–6. On his release, he helped to edit the *Kirti* and in 1928 joined the Communist party of India. He was arrested in the Meerut conspiracy case and spent four years (1929–33) in gaol. He was secretary of the Punjab Committee of the Communist party from 1934–50 and was member of the Central Committee of the party from 1943–53. Josfi is the most important communist leader of the Punjab.

49 Listed in the *Un-American Activities Report.*

13. Gurdwara Reform: Rise of the Akali Immortals

The awakening brought about by the Singh Sabha movement had made the Sikhs conscious of their rights. While the educated began to press for their due in services and administrative bodies (municipalities, district boards, provincial and central legislatures), the masses were more anxious to gain control of their gurdwaras. There were no rules for the administration of Sikh shrines and over many of them priests (*mahaṅts*) who were Hindus as often as Sikhs had asserted proprietary rights. The incomes of some of the gurdwaras, such as the Golden Temple in Amritsar and the birthplace of Guru Nanak at Nankana, ran into several lacs per year. For many years, Sikh associations carried on civil litigation against the mahaṅts. Then the impatience generated by the Ghadr and the nationalist movement spurred the Sikh masses into jettisoning methods of petition and redress from courts of law followed by the Singh Sabhaites and to adopt instead the non-cooperation (*nā milvertan*) and passive resistance of the newly formed party, the *Akālīs* (Immortals). This brought them into conflict with the Punjabi Hindus, many of whom unwittingly sided with the mahaṅts as well as the administration, which felt impelled to support the priests who were in possession of the temples. In order to fully grasp the importance of this movement, one should know something of the evolution of the gurdwara and its importance in Sikh social life.

Gurdwara: Its Income and Management

The first Sikh temple was probably established by Nanak at Kartarpur after his return from his travels. It was then a simple *dharamsāl* (place of worship), where his disciples gathered to listen to his discourses and to sing hymns. The dharamsāl soon became a community centre where, apart from worship and religious ceremonies connected with births, baptisms, betrothals, marriages, and obsequies, there was a free kitchen, the gurukā-laṅgar, and a school where children learnt the alphabet and their daily prayers. It also became the *paṅcāyatghar*, where the elders met to settle disputes and to deliberate on matters concerning the community. These functions were performed in the smallest village gurdwara as well as in the biggest. The village temple subsisted on the contributions made by the local peasants; the bigger shrines received large sums in offerings, particularly during religious festivals when their laṅgars would be called upon to feed as many as 50,000 pilgrims in one day. To meet these obligations, sardars of the misls, and thereafter Maharajah Ranjit Singh, his family, and the Sikh princes, assigned large estates to their favourite shrines. Some like the Golden Temple, the temples at Nankana and Panja Sahib had sizeable jagirs attached to them. With the introduction of canal irrigation, the income derived from land of the gurdwaras assumed princely proportions.

No rules had been made for the management of the gurdwaras nor were qualifications prescribed for their caretakers. In the days of Mughal persecution, the job of *graṅthī* (scripture reader) was a hazardous one, and many important shrines were entrusted to members of the Udasi order, who did not fully subscribe to the Khalsa creed and, being usually clean-shaven, could disclaim their association with Sikhism when their lives were in danger. Even after Mughal rule, these shrines continued to be looked after by Udasis, and the post of graṅthī-cum-manager passed from father to son. The less importrnt gurdwaras were looked after by men who wished to dedicate their life to prayer and the service of the community.

With the establishment of British rule, new settlement records had to be made. In many of these, the lands and properties attached to the gurdwaras were entered against the names of the mahants.[1]

Where the congregation was vigilant, the entry remained a nominal one; where the priests were able to have it their own way, they were recorded as owners and began to utilize and alienate the property as they wished. The Udasis, who were as much Hindu as they were Sikh, and anxious to attract Hindu worshippers, installed images of Hindu gods and goddesses in gurdwara premises. There were also some cases of misuse of the sacred precincts.[2]

Management of the Golden Temple had always been of special interest to the community. After the annexation, matters of importance were sometimes looked into by the deputy commissioner of Amritsar; for the rest, the priests had everything

1 'On the advent of the British rule, however, the very word of "possession" acquired special significance and unfortunately very little, if any, distinction at all was made between possession as owners and possession as servants of the public for carrying out the religious and charitable services, connected with the gurdwaras. The result was that the incumbents began to feel and exercise personal rights in the endowments which soon led, as it was bound to lead, to the deterioration of their characters. The Sikhs were too stunned—by the blow depriving them of their empire—to offer much resistance to this encroachment upon their rights.' Mehtab Singh *PLCD*, 14 March 1921, p. 360.

2 'In proportion as the properties and incomes of the gurdwaras increased by canal irrigation and offerings, etc., etc. the mahants became more and more depraved. Bad characters flocked around them as *celas* to lead easy and immoral lives. Resorting of desperate characters to our gurdwaras and their association with the mahants converted these sacred places of virtue and religion to brothels and dens of gamblers, drunkards, robbers and thieves. No man's honour and no woman's virtue was safe. Women of the highest families in the land were led astray from the path of duty and virtue and gave birth to illegitimate children. Maidens were abducted and outraged. Mahants kept mistresses and concubines and in doing so did not confine themselves to their own community. From prostitutes they had sons whom they provided with millions worth of properties out of gurdwara funds.' Ibid.

their own way. Soon after the suppression of the mutiny, leading Sikh sardars moved the government to reorganize the management of shrines. At a meeting held on 22 December 1859, over which the deputy commissioner presided, it was decided to set up a management committee of nine members. The committee, however, does not seem to have taken much interest, and the management remained as before in the hands of the head priest under the direct supervision of the deputy commissioner.[3]

Singh Sabha was the first to protest against the exclusion of Sikhs of untouchable castes and the performance of idolatrous ritual in the bigger shrines. The priests of Hazur Sahib in Nanded (Hyderabad state) retaliated by excommunicating members of the Singh Sabha and exhorted the priests of other temples to do the same. The behest could not be carried out as the Singh Sabha had become powerful in the Punjab; on the contrary, as a result of pressure applied by the Sabha, Hindu idols were removed from the precincts of the Golden Temple in 1905. A year later, when the manager died, the Singh Sabha pressed upon the deputy commissioner the need to consult representatives of the community in the appointment of a successor.

Leaders of the Singh Sabha were loyalists who believed in doing no more than making representations to officials or instituting suits. The misuse of gurdwara property required more drastic action. Matters came to a head in 1912, when, in the course of the building of the new capital, the government acquired land attached to gurdwara Rikab Ganj in Delhi and demolished an old boundary wall. Radical elements seized the opportunity to challenge the mahant's right to alienate gurdwara property and condemned the demolition of the gurdwara wall as

3 No specific qualifications were ever laid down regarding granthis or priests. The Nizam's government had, however, ruled that in Nanded (in the Nizam's dominion) only a celibate of good character who did not drink could be appointed head priest. In *Narain Singh Vs Bhagat Singh* (Civil Suit 807 of 3 December 1886) the court had ruled that only a *nādī* (a celibate) above the age of 35 years and of unimpeachable character could be appointed as priest of the Golden Temple. *Tribune*, 20 June 1886.

sacrilegious. There was talk of launching a *morcā* (battle front); but it had to be postponed because of the war.

The matter was re-agitated in the autumn of 1918. Disappointment over the Montagu-Chelmsford constitutional proposals (discussed hereafter), followed by large-scale terrorism practised by the martial law administration, made the Sikh masses critical of the government. Men of nationalist views broke the monopoly of the Singh Sabha over Sikh affairs and set up in the winter of 1919 the Central Sikh League at Amritsar. At a subsequent meeting at Lahore, the League passed a resolution of non-cooperation with the British and decided to send volunteers to take forcible possession of Rikab Ganj land acquired by the government. It also demanded that the management of the Khalsa College, Amritsar, be taken out of official control and placed in the hands of a Sikh committee.

The government tried to appease the Sikhs. The demolished wall of Rikab Ganj was rebuilt, and the acquired land was restored to a committee of representative Sikhs who had taken over the management of the shrine. Other minor grievances of the Sikhs were also redressed. Sikhs were, in one respect, exempted from the operation of the Arms Act and were allowed to carry kirpans; Sikh prisoners in gaols were permitted to retain their religious emblems and, unlike other inmates who had to wear cloth caps, were allowed to keep their turbans.

These concessions had little bearing on the question of the control of the shrines. On this matter, the authorities were slow to respond to the demands of the Sikhs and somewhat insensitive to the temper of the times. The official attitude was that a person in whose name a piece of land or property was registered was prima facie the owner and could be ousted only by means of a suit for possession in the civil court. It did not occur to them that the mahant of a gurdwara was exactly in the same position as the vicar of a church in whom no proprietary rights were vested. Many Sikh committees had tried and discovered the futility of civil actions. Court fees had to be paid on the value of the property, and suits could be prolonged interminably by the ingenuity of lawyers. Frustration and anger began to mount.

Meanwhile, Sikhs had been planning a committee of management of their own. On 15 November 1920, a proclamation was made from the Akal Takht, Amritsar, to the effect that a committee of 175 to be known as the Shiromanī Gurdwārā Prabaṅdhak Committee (Central Gurdwara Management Committee—thereafter referred to by the initials SGPC) had been set up for the management of all Sikh shrines; Sunder Singh Majithia, Harbans Singh of Attari, and Bhai Jodh Singh, were elected president, vice-president, and secretary, respectively. The more radical elements organized a semi-military corps of volunteers known as the Akālī Dal (army of immortals). The Akali Dal was to raise and train men for 'action' in taking over the gurdwaras from recalcitrant mahaṅts. A Gurmukhi paper, the *Akālī*, was started.[4]

Under pressure of Sikh opinion, backed frequently by demonstrations of strength, the mahaṅts began to yield control over gurdwara properties to elected committees and agreed to become paid graṅthīs. However, at the gurdwara at Tarn Taran, there was violence resulting in the deaths of two Akalis and injuries to over a dozen; Tarn Taran was only the prelude.

The Nankana Holocaust

The birthplace of Guru Nanak was among the most richly endowed Sikh shrines. At the time, it was being managed by an Udasi mahaṅt, Narain Das, who lived in the gurdwara with a mistress and was known to have invited prostitutes to dance in

4 The editors, Mangal Singh and Hira Singh Dard, later became important figures in Sikh politics. Mangal Singh (b.1896), a Gill Jat of village Gill in Ludhiana district, served a five-year sentence for seditious writing in the *Akālī*. He later joined the Indian National Congress and represented Sikh interests at the All Parties Conference and in the drafting of the Nehru Report. He was a member of the Central Assembly from 1934–45.

Hira Singh Dard (d.1965) was imprisoned several times and later joined the Communist party. He edited the weekly *Phulwārī* and also made his mark as a poet.

the sacred premises. Local Sikhs threatened to eject him by force.[5] The mahant asked the police for protection and hired nearly 400 thugs to safeguard and defend his interest.

In the early morning hours of 20 February 1921, a *jathā* (band) of Akalis led by Lachman Singh Dharovalia entered the gurdwara. The gates of the shrine were then closed, and Narain Das's thugs attacked the jathā with swords, hatchets, and firearms. The dead and dying Akalis were then dragged to a pile of logs which had been collected earlier, and burnt. By the time the police and local Sikhs came on the scene, 130 men had been consumed by the flames.[6]

The news of the outrage spread like wildfire. Bands of Akalis from distant towns began to converge on Nankana. The commissioner of Lahore[7] hurried to the scene and with great alacrity handed over the keys of the shrine to a representative of the SGPC

The atmosphere of the days following Jallianwala came again to pervade the Punjab. The districts of Lahore, Amritsar, and Sheikhupura were declared 'proclaimed areas' under the Seditious Meetings Act; the more outspoken leaders were arrested.

5 The situation at Nankana had attracted the attention of the authorities earlier. On 16 February 1921 (four days before the incident narrated in the text), the government had issued a press release announcing the appointment of one Shaikh Asghar Ali to preside over a conference of the Akalis and Lieutenant Kartar Singh Bedi representing mahants, *sants* (holy men) and *pujāris* (priests).

A widely publicised letter written by the commissioner of Lahore to Kartar Singh Bedi which assured the mahants of their legal rights was responsible for the hardening of the mahants' attitude. *PLCD*, 5 March 1921, p. 21.

6 *PLCD*, 1921, p. 304. For the murder of the 130 Akalis, three men were sentenced to death and two, including Narain Das, to transportation for life (*King vs Narain Das and others*, *Tribune*, 3 March 1922).

7 The commissioner, Mr King, made a personal statement on the incident to the Legislative Council on 15 March 1921. He said: 'Unfortunately the precipitate action of one party threw out our calculations. Lachman Singh's party went to Nankana quite unexpectedly, and there was no one in authority to prevent the dreadful happenings that occurred.' *PLCD*, 15 March 1921, pp. 380–3.

Resolutions to non-cooperate with the government were passed by several provincial organizations.[8]

The summer of 1921 was one of acute political unrest all over India: the Moplahs rose in Malabar; there were hartāls in the wake of the Prince of Wales' visit; foreign liquor shops were picketed and bonfires made of British goods. These demonstrations were met by baton charges and arrests. By an unhappy coincidence, the failure of the winter monsoon had its delayed effect in the summer; in several districts of the Punjab, famine conditions came to prevail.

Repression and economic distress quickened the pace of Sikh agitation.[9] Those who, like members of the Chief Khalsa Diwan, collaborated with the government came to be described contemptuously as *jholī cuks* (toadies). Radical leadership which came to the fore reflected different shades of political opinion and religious enthusiasm. Baba Kharak Singh,[10] Mehtab Singh,[11] and Teja Singh Samundari were largely motivated by religious considerations. Master Tara Singh[12] and three brothers—Amar

8 Mahatma Gandhi visited Nankana. He said, 'Everything points to a second edition of Dyerism, more barbarous and more fiendish than the barbarism at Jallianwala Bagh.' *The Times*, 11 March 1921.

9 'Moreover, it is believed that the awakening of national consciousness is to a certain extent responsible for the spirit of restlessness and dissatisfaction with the management of shrines and gurdwaras.' Statement by Mian Fazl-i-Husain. *PLCD*, 14 March 1921, p. 350.

10 Kharak Singh (1867–1963) Ahluwalia was the son of an army contractor of Sialkot. He was for some years, the most powerful leader of the Sikhs—their *betāj bādśāh* (the uncrowned king). Though called a Baba, he has no connection whatsoever with the Communists.

11 Mehtab Singh (1879–1938), an Arora of Shahpur district, qualified as a barrister and had a lucrative practice.

12 Tara Singh (b. 24 June 1885) of village Harial (district Rawalpindi), was the son of a Hindu of the Malhotra caste. He was converted to Sikhism while at school, educated at Rawalpindi and then at the Khalsa College, Amritsar. After taking his degree in 1907, he took a diploma in teaching and became a teacher in the Khalsa High School, Lyallpur: the title 'master' has attached to his name ever since. He joined the Akali movement at its inception and became the dominant figure in Sikh affairs in the 1930s. Master Tara Singh has published many works on religion,

Singh, Sarmukh Singh, and Jaswant Singh of Jhabal—who were the representatives of majority opinion, were equally religious and nationalistic. There were also fanatics believing in the militant tradition of the Nihangs who wanted to meet force with force. This group organised itself into bands of terrorists known as Babbar Akālīs (immortal lions).

The new leaders exploited the inflamed sentiments of the people to the full. The Sikhs were asked to wear black turbans in honour of the martyrs of Nankana. A *śahīdī* (martyrs) fund was opened to provide for the families of the deceased, to set up a school and a hospital at Nankana and a missionary college at Amritsar as memorials to the victims. Collections for the purpose were made all over the province. The effects of this propaganda were visible at the birthday celebrations of Guru Nanak that autumn. Over 50,000 Sikhs congregated at Nankana, of whom 20,000 professed to be Akalis, and 12–15,000 belonged to jathās.[13]

The Keys Affair

Into this highly inflammable atmosphere the deputy commissioner of Amritsar threw a lighted match. Being suspicious of the bona fides of Baba Kharak Singh, the new president of the SGPC, he took the keys of the treasury of the Golden Temple and planned to hand them over to his own nominee. He clamped down the Seditious Meetings Act and arrested 193 of the leading Akalis. The leaders were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment and fines.

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politics, and fiction of which the better known are *Bābā Tegā Singh* and *Prem Lagan*. Two papers, *Prabhāt* (dawn) in Urdu and *Jathedār* in Gurmukhi publicize his views.

13 A police report stated that 'A strong national spirit and contempt for authority pervaded the assembly.' *The Akali Dal* (CID Report, pp. 6–7).

The fair was made memorable by the dramatically stage-managed appearance of Gurdit Singh of *Komagata Maru* fame, who surrendered himself to the police. Master Mota Singh, who had been declared an absconder some months earlier, arrived with an escort of armed Akalis, delivered a violent speech to the assemblage and then disappeared.

The seizure of the shrine keys aroused considerable excitement in India. The government realized that the deputy commissioner of Amritsar had disturbed a hornet's nest, and, a few days after the passing of the sentences, the governor of the Punjab announced his decision to release the prisoners and hand over the keys to Kharak Singh's committee. Mahatma Gandhi described it as the 'first decisive battle won'.

The lieutenant governor, Sir Edward Maclagan, tried to push through legislation to transfer gurdwaras to their rightful owners, the Sikh congregation. In March 1921, the education minister, Mian Fazl-i-Husain, introduced a bill to set up a Board of Commissioners which would take over the management of Sikh shrines. The bill was opposed by the Sikh legislators, who objected to having non-Sikhs on a board whose sole function was to manage Sikh places of worship. Nor could the members agree on what constituted a gurdwara; a large number of Udasis declared their shrines to be Hindu temples and so gained the backing of Hindu and anti-Akali Sikh members.[14] Mian Fazl-i-Husain had the bill passed into law as the Sikh Gurdwaras and Shrines Act VI of 1922. The Sikhs ignored the legislation.

The SGPC passed a resolution (21 May 1921) not to cooperate with the government and exhorted Sikhs to boycott British goods. The moderates quit the SGPC. About the same time Mehtab Singh resigned from his post as deputy president (speaker) of the Punjab Council and thus deprived the legislature and the government of the benefit of the Akali point of view. District officers who had been piqued by the lieutenant governor's decision in the keys affair began to conduct themselves in a

14 Mehtab Singh retaliated by a vitriolic attack on the mahants: 'The mahants are a class of parasites. They have become infected with the poison, which in accordance with a saying of our guru, is contained in the income derived from the alms of the worshippers, and this poison has made devil of a man.... If the government is honestly prepared to help us in this matter we have no objection to receiving this aid, but we are not prepared to admit that sadhus belonging to the Nirmala or Udasi sects possess the right of interfering in our religious affairs and of wounding our religious susceptibilities.' *PLCD*, 5 April 1921, pp. 544–5.

harsh and uncompromising manner with the Akalis. Over 1200 arrests were made in 13 districts of the province.[15] Among the most headstrong was the deputy commissioner of Amritsar who precipitated a showdown with the Akalis.

Guru ka Bagh

Guru kā Bāgh (the garden of the Guru), a small shrine thirteen miles from Amritsar, had been erected to commemorate the visit of Guru Arjun. Adjacent to the shrine was a plot of land on which acacia trees were planted to provide firewood for the gurdwara kitchen. The Udasi mahant accepted baptism and submitted himself to the authority of an elected committee. Then without any apparent cause, in the first week of August 1921, he lodged a complaint that Akalis were cutting timber from the gurdwara land. The police arrested the Akalis and charged them with criminal trespass. Akali leaders held a meeting at the Guru ka Bagh in contravention of the order under the Seditious Meetings Act. The police dispersed the meeting and arrested the leaders, including Mehtab Singh and Master Tara Singh. The SGPC took up the challenge.

Jathās of 100 Akalis each were formed. They first took an oath at the Akal Takht to remain non-violent, then proceeded towards Guru ka Bagh. The police stopped them at various points far removed from the land in dispute, ordered them to disperse, and, on their refusal to do so, beat them mercilessly with their lathis, jackboots, and fists. For nineteen days the encounters between the police and the passive resisters continued and were observed by many Indian leaders. The Indian National Congress appointed a committee of enquiry, which lauded the Akalis and censured the police for the atrocities committed by it.[16] When

15 Sir John Maynard put the figure at 1286, excluding persons who were arrested and subsequently released. *PLCD* 9 August 1922, p. 1698.

16 The committee stated: 'We are all clearly and emphatically of opinion, that the force used was excessive on all occasions and on some was cruelly excessive. Divesting ourselves of all political bias, we consider that the excesses committed reflect the greatest discredit on the Punjab

C. F. Andrews visited the scene, he was deeply moved by the noble 'Christ-like' behaviour of the Akalis. He apprised the lieutenant governor of the brutality of the police and persuaded him to see things for himself. Sir Edward Maclagan arrived at Guru ka Bagh (13 September) and ordered the beatings to stop. Four days later the police retired from the scene. By then 5605 Akalis had been arrested, and 936[17] were hospitalized. The Akalis took possession of Guru ka Bagh along with the disputed land.[18] It was the second decisive battle won.[19]

Guru ka Bagh excited religious fervour to a degree which had not been seen among the Sikhs since the annexation of their kingdom. The trial of the leaders was followed with close interest, and, when the convicted leaders were being removed to gaols to serve their sentences, mammoth crowds greeted them on the route.[20]

Babbar Akali Terrorists

Not all Sikhs accepted the cult of non-violence which the SGPC had adopted. The behaviour of the police at Guru ka Bagh

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Government and are a disgrace to any civilised government.' The committee included an American missionary, Rev. S. E. Stokes. It examined over 100 witnesses and submitted its report on 3 January 1924. *Congress Enquiry Committee Report on the Guru-ka-Bagh.*

17 The official figure given by H. D. Craik in the Punjab Legislative Council was 1650 against whom force was used. *PLCD* 1 November 1922, p. 468.

18 The Guru ka Bagh land was purchased by the Hindu philanthropist, Sir Ganga Ram, and given to the gurdwara. This was obviously a government device to save face.

19 The Indian National Congress, meeting at its annual session at Gaya in December–January, passed a resolution recording 'with pride and admiration its appreciation of the unexampled bravery of the Akali martyrs and the great and noble example of non-violence set by them for the benefit of the whole nation.'

20 On 30 October 1921, thousands of men and women laid themselves on the rail track at Panja Sahib in an attempt to stop a train to give refreshments to the prisoners being escorted to Naushera gaol. Two men were crushed to death before the engine driver could pull up.

induced some to organize an underground terrorist movement.[21] These terrorists were largely drawn from the Ghadr party and soldiers on leave. Two of the most active members were retired Havildar Major Rishen Singh Bidang and Master Mota Singh. To get arms, the Babbars sent agents to the North West Frontier Province and to the Indian states. They also tried to persuade soldiers to steal them from army arsenals. They acquired a couple of duplicators and began to issue a bulletin entitled the *Babbar Akālī Doābā.*

The Babbars were no more successful than the Ghadrites in securing arms; and their organization, like the Ghadr party, was rendered ineffective by the members' inability to remain secretive and by allowing personal spite to mingle with revolutionary zeal. The Punjab CID did not have much difficulty in infiltrating the Babbars' inner circles.

Babbar violence was of short but intense duration. For a few months they terrorized the Jullundur Doab and Hoshiarpur. Encounters with the police redounded to the credit of the Babbars, most of whom displayed a contemptuous disregard for their lives.[22] But by the summer of 1923 the wave of violence was spent, and most of the Babbars had been apprehended. Of the 62 Babbar Akalis put up for trial, 22 turned witnesses for the Crown. The trial was conducted in camera in Lahore gaol and

21 A nebulous terrorist group had been formed earlier. At the Sikh Educational Conference, which met at Hoshiarpur in March 1921, a band of terrorists resolved to assassinate people they believed responsible for the Nankana outrage. Seven men were convicted for conspiracy to murder and five declared absconders.

22 Two instances are worthy of record. On 31 August 1923, four Babbars led by Karam Singh, acting editor of the *Babbar Akālī Doābā,* were surrounded in village Babeli by a large force of police and armed constabulary. The Babbars refused to surrender and when the hut in which they were hiding was set on fire, they emerged with drawn kirpans (they had no firearms) and fell under a hail of rifle-shot while charging the police.

Even more dramatic was the conduct of Dhanna Singh of Behbalpur on 25 October 1923. He was betrayed by one of his comrades and captured at night while asleep. With his manacled hands he was able to explode a hand-grenade under his armpit. The blast killed Dhanna Singh, nine policemen, and a buffalo.

was presided over by an English judge. Six men, including Kishen Singh Bidang, were condemned to death, and, apart from 34 who were acquitted, the rest were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment. The condemned men declined to appeal or petition for mercy and were hanged.[23]

The attitudes of both the government and the Akalis hardened. The Akalis became more obstreperous and forcibly occupied more gurdwaras: one notable takeover was the historic shrine at Muktsar (17 February 1923). The police became harsher in their treatment of Akali prisoners. There were complaints of dragging men by their long hair,[24] beating them, keeping them hungry, and forcing them to sleep out in the open on cold winter nights.[25]

A resolution urging the release of Akali prisoners was moved in the Legislative Council and passed with the strong support of non-officials, both Hindu and Muslim. The official spokesman admitted that, in the Hindu-Muslim communal riots in March 1923, the Akalis 'rendered useful assistance to the authorities in maintaining order pending the arrival of military reinforcements.' In recognition of these services the lieutenant governor ordered the release of over 1000 Akalis arrested in August and September 1922 at Guru ka Bagh.[26]

23 The Babbar Ghadrite combination was responsible for some notable crimes in later years. S. G. M. Beatty, who earned notoriety at Guru ka Bagh, was murdered in a village of Patiala (a Babbar was hanged for the murder). Bela Singh of Jaina, who had fled Vancouver after murdering and betraying his co-religionists, was hacked to death in his village in 1933.

24 *PLCD*, 9 November 1922, pp. 57–9.

25 Conditions in Attock fort gaol were investigated by Raja Narendra Nath and Sewak Ram, both members of the Punjab Council. Over 80 Akali prisoners were found to be in the hospital suffering from bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia, etc. *PLCD*, 6 March 1923, p. 989.

To protest against the treatment of his fellow Akalis and the ban on Gandhi caps for non-Sikh prisoners, Baba Kharak Singh serving his sentence of four years' rigorous imprisonment refused to wear anything more than his *kach* even on the coldest days. He was kept in solitary confinement for over six months.

26 This was the second attempt to secure the release of Akalis. The first resolution moved in November 1922 was defeated by supporters of

It was with a sense of triumph that the Akalis arranged the cleansing of the tank *(kār sevā)* of the Golden Temple. The operation, which is performed after every two or three decades to remove the accumulation of sediment left by millions of pilgrims who bathe in the holy waters, took one month to complete, during which hundreds of thousands of Sikhs from all over India and abroad came to Amritsar. The Akalis made full use of this opportunity to disseminate propaganda and work up feelings against the government.[27] They began to look upon themselves as the sole representatives of the community. A decision of the SGPC became like a proclamation of the guru.

While the kār sevā was in progress, the Central Sikh League held a session at Jallianwala Bagh. At this meeting, rumours began to circulate that the government meant to remove Maharajah Ripudaman Singh of Nabha from his state. A few days later came an official announcement that the maharajah had abdicated.

Jaito

The maharajah of Nabha's dispute was with the maharajah of Patiala, not with the Government of India. But he had taken interest in the affairs of the community and the government was aware of his sympathies with the nationalist and Akali movements.[28] The government appointed Justice Stewart of the

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the government; *PLCD*, 8 March 1923, p. 1100. According to the government, the total number of Akalis in gaol on 1 January 1923 was 3597: of these 3148 were convicted at Guru ka Bagh. On 25 October 1923 Sir John Maynard gave the figure of Guru ka Bagh prisoners as 'over 4400' Sikhs. The final figure was 5554. *PLCD*, 2 January 1924, p. 124.

27 It was commonly believed that a hawk which occasionally appeared and sat on the central pinnacle of the Golden Temple was a messenger of Guru Gobind Singh. The legend generated enormous religious fervour and further added to the popularity of the Akalis, to whose activities the 'miracle' came to be ascribed.

28 'The Shiromani Committee received thousands of telegrams from the people demanding that full investigation be made into this (Nabha) affair. The committee addressed a telegram to this effect to the viceroy,

Allahabad High Court to enquire into the dispute. His finding was adverse to the ruler of Nabha.[29] The political agent 'persuaded' Ripudaman Singh to abdicate in favour of his minor son. The SGPC passed a resolution exhorting the Sikhs to observe 9 September, 1923, as 'Nabha Day'. The Sikhs of Nabha organized a non-stop recitation of the Granth in their gurdwaras. One such ceremony held at the temple at Gangsar in village Jaito was interrupted by the police. A new *morcā* was thus launched; batches of passive resisters began arriving every day at Jaito. The government took up the challenge. The SGPC and the Akali Dal were declared illegal, and 59 Akali leaders were arrested.[30] They were charged with conspiracy to wage war against the king and were taken to Lahore fort for trial.

The maharajah of Nabha had great sympathy with the Gurdwara Reform movement and had rendered good service in the agitation over the wall of Rikab Ganj.' Statement by Mehtab Singh in the *Akali Leaders Case*, I, 711.

29 Justice Stewart conducted the enquiry at Ambala from 3 January to 2 May 1923. His findings were never disclosed to the public; only the parties concerned and the government received copies of the judgment. Details of the charges and counter-charges by one maharajah against the other were known only after the Akalis and, following them, the Indian National Congress had formally pledged support to Ripudaman Singh. At a meeting of the Central Sikh League in June 1923 at Amritsar, the president, Sunder Singh Lyallpuri, while supporting Nabha, admitted that 'both maharajahs had earned a bad name'. At the Indian National Congress Session at Coconada in December 1923, the president, Maulana Mohammad Ali said: 'We hold no brief for the maharajah sahib; but this much is certain, that even if all that his detractors say of him be true, he was not deposed for any such shortcomings, but for his virtues.' The Akalis published their version of the affair in a pamphlet entitled *Truth about Nabha*, wherein they stated that the hostility towards Ripudaman Singh was due to his association with nationalist leaders.

The name of Bhupendra Singh of Patiala (d.1937) had become a legend because of his gargantuan appetite for women. Ripudaman Singh of Nabha was no saint either. Among the many charges and countercharges hurled by the two maharajahs at each other, one related to the murder of one Lal Singh and another to the disappearance of a woman, Ishar Kaur.

30 They included Mehtab Singh, Teja Singh Samundri, Teja Singh Akarpuri, Bhagat Jaswant Singh, Master Tara Singh, Bawa Harikishen

The incarceration of all the top leaders of the party did not kill the Nabha agitation; on the contrary, it became a mass movement in the real sense of the term. The sizes of jathās going to Jaito increased from twenty-five each to a hundred and then from one hundred to five hundred. They came from all parts of the Punjab, and through every village they passed, Sikh, Hindu, or Muslim, they were feted, garlanded, and sent off with good wishes. The Indian National Congress declared its full sympathy with the morcā; among those arrested at Jaito was Jawaharlal Nehru.

While the Jaito morcā was going on, a second front was opened at Bhai Pheru in Lahore, where the mahant had resiled from an earlier agreement with the Akalis and charged them for trespass. Batches of 25 Akalis began to present themselves for arrest every day at Bhai Pheru.

The unending stream of passive resisters that continued to arrive at Jaito and Bhai Pheru exasperated the government, and it made a desperate bid to smash the movement. In the first week of January 1924, Amritsar police raided the Akal Takht, seized documents of the SGPC, and arrested another 62 men. Measures taken by the Punjab police encouraged Nabha state authorities to go a step further. The English administrator ordered the confiscation of properties of the Akalis in the state, restricted many thousands to their villages, and authorized use of greater violence against jathās coming to Jaito. On 21 February 1924, one such jathā of 500 Akalis arrived at Jaito and on its refusal to disperse was fired on by the state police resulting in considerable loss of life.[31] The shooting aroused sympathy for

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Singh, Gyani Sher Singh, Professor Teja Singh, Professor Narinjan Singh, Sarmukh Singh Jhabal, Sohan Singh Josh, Gopal Singh Qaumi, and Seva Singh Thikrivala. This trial had the most decisive influence on the future of Sikh politics. It went on for two years and three months without any result.

31 According to the government version, 21 men were killed and 33 injured; according to Akali sources the number of dead was over a hundred and of the injured over two hundred.

Pressure of public opinion forced the government to hold an enquiry into the Jaito firing. A subordinate magistrate of the provincial civil service

the Akali cause throughout India,[32] and the Sikhs were drawn closer to the freedom movement.

The government tried to isolate the Akalis by giving wide publicity to the story that they (the Akalis) wished to restore Sikh rule in the Punjab. This propaganda had the reverse effect. Even Sikhs who had kept aloof from the movement felt that it was their duty to support a party which intended to restore their kingdom. And since there was no substance in the charge, Sikh leaders as well as Congress were able to accuse the government of deliberate perfidy. Meanwhile jathās continued marching triumphantly across the Punjab to Amritsar and onwards to Jaito or Bhai Pheru.

Sikh Gurdwaras Act

Army authorities were seriously perturbed by the sympathy for the Akalis in the services. In March 1924, General Sir William Birdwood opened negotiations with the Akali leaders. By then the SGPC had declared that the Jaito morcā was not a protest against the removal of Ripudaman Singh but was intended solely

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exonerated the state police from charge of excessive use of force. *India in 1923–24*, pp. 325–31. Although the Akalis exaggerated the figures of killed and wounded, their plea that the police fired without provocation is convincing. It was corroborated by men such as Professor Gidwani and Dr Kitchlew, who were arrested at the time, and an independent witness, Mr Zimand, correspondent of the *New York* Times, who was present throughout the incident. In a letter dated 9 February 1924, written to Mahatma Gandhi, Mr Zimand stated: 'I had every opportunity to see the *jathā* and the crowd; I did not see any one person in the *jathā* or the crowd carrying firearms or any other weapon... members of the *jathā* wore kirpans and the crowd had lathis. As far as I know no one had any other weapons.'

32 On 27 February 1924, 47 members of the Central Legislative Assembly moved an adjournment to discuss the Jaito firing. Among the movers were Mr M. A. Jinnah and Madan Mohan Malaviya. The speaker refused to allow the motion. A day later the working committee of the All India Congress Committee met in Delhi under the presidentship of Maulana Mohammad Ali and passed a resolution of sympathy with the victims of Jaito and promised assistance to the sufferers. A 'Congress-Akali bureau' was set up in Amritsar.

to affirm the right to perform religious ceremonies in their temples without outside interference.[33] General Birdwood's efforts bore fruit later, when Sir Malcolm Hailey became lieutenant governor (May 1924). Hailey was a skilful operator. He kept up police repression against Akali passive resisters and at the same time opened negotiations with moderate elements among the Sikhs. He encouraged the latter to set up *sudhār* (reform) committees of loyal Sikhs in the Sikh districts. He toured the province and made speeches warning the Sikhs that continued agitation would affect their future in the armed services.

Hailey's tactics paid off. Although jathās continued to march (the number of men arrested in Jaito and Bhai Pheru had risen to nearly 10,000), the unity of the community was effectively undermined. A jathā consisting of members of Sikh Sudhar Committees was allowed to enter the gurdwara at Jaito and to perform the *akhaṅd pāth* without interference (October 1924). By this move, Hailey put the onus of proving that the object of the morcā was religious for the Akalis. Through a five-member committee constituted by the Sikh members of the Legislative Council, Hailey presented a draft of a new gurdwara bill to the Akali leaders imprisoned in Lahore fort. The bill met all the Akali demands and was passed into law in 1925.[34] Hailey,

33 Vide Proclamation No. 1541. The Chief Khalsa Diwan had by now come round to the view that the Akalis were deliberately protracting the morcā for political ends. The *Khalsa Advocate* wrote: 'There is a faction amongst the Sikhs, which is using the gurdwara reform movement to mislead the Sikhs and which is preventing an agreement because it does not want the agitation to end.' (Quoted by the *Akali*, 26 March 1924.)

34 The Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1935 had two schedules: the first listed 232 shrines. Another 28 were added to the list which were recognized as Sikh gurdwaras without further enquiry. The second schedule listed 224 *akhārās* of Udasis or Nirmalas which were not to be declared gurdwaras unless they fulfilled certain conditions. Any Sikh could put in a petition within one year to have any institution (except those listed in the second schedule) declared a gurdwara.

A tribunal of three judges was set up to determine whether an institution was or was not a gurdwara and the compensation, if any, to be paid to any one deprived of possession. The tribunal's findings were subject to appeal to the High Court.

however, made it appear that only those who recanted their past deeds would be freed to take over the SGPC.[35] One group led by Mehtab Singh agreed to cooperate and was released. The larger number, which included Baba Kharak Singh and Master Tara Singh, considered the conditional release derogatory to their self-respect and refused to give any undertaking. They also insisted that all Akalis be freed before they would operate the act. A few months later they too were released and, as could have been anticipated, condemned Mehtab Singh's party as collaborators and ousted it from control of the SGPC. Akali unity was shattered, and the agitation at Jaito petered out.[36] Akalis, who had won their bitter struggle against the mahants and the

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The act provided for elected bodies to replace the mahants. The central body, the SGPC, was to consist of 151 members, of whom 120 were to be elected, 12 nominated by the Sikh states, 14 to be co-opted, and 5 to represent the four chief shrines of the faith.

Local gurdwaras were to have their own elected bodies of management with one nominee of the SGPC on its committee. The act also indicated in what way incomes of gurdwaras were to be utilized.

The most important part of the act was to define a Sikh as 'one who believed in the ten gurus and the *Granth Sāhib* and was not a *patit* [apostate].' This last proviso was particularly odious to the Hindu members of the Legislative Council.

35 'I read to you the precise terms of our decision. The Punjab government will release (or will withdraw from the prosecution of) any person (other than those persons who have been convicted of or are under trial for crimes of violence or incitement to such crimes) who has been convicted by the criminal courts, or is under trial in such courts on charges arising out of the recent agitation in the Sikh community or on charges involving offences against the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, provided that (and this is important) such release will be conditional on such persons signing and undertaking that they will obey the provisions of the law recently enacted securing to the Sikh community the control and management of shrines and their endowments and will not seek by means of force, or show of force, or by criminal trespass to gain control or possession of any shrine or the property attached to it or its endowments.' *PLCD*, 9 July 1925, p. 1304.

36 Another pointless morcā was launched by Baba Kharak Singh at Daska in district Sialkot. This was subsequent to a dispute with Hindus over property attached to a gurdwara.

government over control of their shrines, now turned their venom against each other.

The number of men and women who were jailed or lost their lives in this movement cannot be stated with precision; the government's figures and those of the Akalis never tallied. However, the following statement made by Tara Singh of Ferozepur, who took a leading part in the debate on the Gurdwara Act in the Punjab Legislative Council, was never challenged by the official members and may be taken to approximate the truth: 'Briefly summarising, these sacrifices (at Tarn Taran, Nankana Sahib, Guru-ka-Bagh, Bhai Pheru and Jaito) amount to 30,000 arrested, 400 killed and 2000 wounded, Rs 15 lacs of fine inflicted, including forfeiture of pensions of retired soldiers. In addition to this, a ban has been placed on civil and military recruitment of Sikhs.'[37]

The most significant outcome of the four years of intense agitation, in which the Hindus supported the Udasi mahants against the Akalis, was to widen further the gulf between the two communities. The breakaway from Hinduism, to which Kahan Singh of Nabha had given expression in his pamphlet *Ham Hiṅdū Nahīṅ Haiṉ*—We are not Hindus (discussed in the chapter on Singh Sabha), was even more emphatically stated by Mehtab Singh in a speech he delivered on the first Gurdwara Bill.

'I, for one, say that if the Sikhs do not wish to remain in the fold of Hinduism, why should the Hindus seek to force them to do so. What benefit can they obtain by keeping an unwilling people as partners in their community? Why not let them go? That, Sir, is at the bottom of the whole excitement. The Hindus say, we will manage your affairs for you as your gurdwaras are partly yours and partly ours. We say that we wish to manage our

37 *PLCD*, 7 May 1925, p. 1105. According to Dr B. R. Ambedkar, because of the Akali agitation the proportion of Sikhs in the array was reduced from 20 per cent in 1914 to 13 per cent in 1930 while that of Punjabi Mussalmans and Pathans rose from 26 per cent in 1914 to 34 per cent in 1930. B. R. Ambedkar. *Pakistan and the Partition of India*, p. 84.

own affairs and look after our own gurdwaras and are determined to do so.'[38]

Hindus, despite their opposition to the Akalis, continued to protest that Sikhs were Hindus. 'I look upon Sikhism as higher Hinduism,' said a leader of the Punjab Hindus.[39] Another, who came to the support of the gurdwara legislation, referred to the Sikhs as 'the flesh of our flesh, and the bone of our bone.'[40] Whether the Sikhs were a separate people or a branch of the Hindu social system became a major issue in the years that followed.

The SGPC became a sort of parliament of the Sikhs: its decisions acquired the sanctity of the ancient *gurumātā*; the Dal became its army; and the income from gurdwaras (over 10 lacs of rupees per year) gave it financial sustenance. Disbursement of this income in the management of shrines, patronage in the appointment of hundreds of granthis, *sevādārs* (temple servants), teachers, and professors for schools and colleges which were built, arrangements for the training of granthīs and for missionary activity outside the Punjab, all made the SGPC a government within the government. Its control became the focal point of Sikh politics. The Akalis automatically took over control and have never relinquished it. The struggle for power has been between different factions of the same party. Of these, the one controlled by Master Tara Singh remained (except for brief periods) dominant for the following four decades.

38 *PLCD*, 8 April 1921, p. 583.

39 Raja Narendra Nath said: 'The *Granth Sāhib* is nothing more nor less than the higher teachings of the Vedas and Upanishads in popular language.... I need not dilate upon the close connection between the Hindus and Sikhs. It is well known that of two brothers, one may be a Hindu and the other a Sikh, and that the Sikhs and Hindus intermarry freely. Khatri and Arora Sikhs living in towns are supposed to follow Hindu law. In this connection it would be interesting to peruse the Privy Council ruling reported as No. 84, P.R. 1903, in which the learned judges of the Privy Council held that Sikhs were Hindus.' *PLCD*, 5 April 1921, p. 539.

40 *PLCD*, 6 July 1925, p. 1214. Sir Gokul Chand Narang, later minister in the Punjab government and author of *Transformation of Sikhism*.

The Akali movement was indirectly responsible for the political awakening in the princely states. After the settlement of disputes over the gurdwaras, the Akalis from the states began to agitate against the autocratic misuse of power by the maharajahs, chiefly Bhupendra Singh of Patiala. Bhupendra Singh retaliated by having the leading agitator, Seva Singh Thikrivala, transferred from Lahore gaol and interned in Patiala on a palpably false charge of theft. The Akalis took up the case of Thikrivala and let loose a campaign publicizing Bhupendra Singh's amorous escapades and the sadistic behaviour of his police. The maharajah was able to win over a section of the Akalis,[41] but could not silence the Punjabi and Urdu press.

In 1928 Akalis from the states joined with Hindu nationalists and founded the Prajā Maṅdal (States People's Association); the Maṅdal was later affiliated to the All India States People's Congress (in its turn associated with the Indian National Congress). Seva Singh Thikrivala was the moving spirit behind the Mandal. He was arrested several times and in 1935 succumbed to third degree methods practised on him by the maharajah's gaolers. As a result of the murder of Thikrivala,[42] the anti-maharajah, anti-British movement gained momentum in all princely states of the Punjab.

41 The pro-Patiala group was led by Gyani Sher Singh and Jaswant Singh Jhabal. They condemned the agitation against Bhupendra Singh as a *bhrā māru jang*—murderous war against a brother.

42 A statue of Seva Singh Thikrivala (1878–1935) stands on the main thoroughfare leading to the palace. It was erected at the instance of Brish Bhan when he was chief minister of Patiala and the Punjab States Union in 1955.

Prominent among the men associated with Thikrivala were Bhagwan Singh Lohnguvalia, Gyani Zail Singh, Pritam Singh Gojran (later protagonist of the Sikh state), and Jagir Singh Joga (communist).

14. Constitutional Reforms and the Sikhs

Sikh Indifference Towards Politics

Of all the provinces of British India, the Punjab was the slowest to respond to schemes of self-government; and of the three communities of the Punjab, the Sikhs were the least responsive. Punjabi Hindus and Muslims had the benefit of the guidance of enlightened Hindus and Muslims from other parts of India. The Sikhs had no political teachers. The Malwais, who had long been under British protection, had remained under the unenlightened autocracies of princes and jagirdars who were singularly ill-equipped for leadership.

The formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 and Sir Syed Ahmed's United Patriotic Association in 1887 began a ferment in the Indian body politic. At the same time communal bodies became active: Muslim organizations began to press for special rights and protection of Urdu; Hindu associations began to demand the prohibition of the slaughter of cows and the recognition of Hindi as the national language. Educated members of the Chief Khalsa Diwan felt that they should also press for the rights of Sikhs: separate representation, special privileges and safeguards in services, and facilities for developing their language and preserving their way of life.

The Punjab Legislative Council was established in 1897.[1] It consisted of nine members nominated by the lieutenant governor and was more in the nature of a durbar than a body of representative citizens. The governors, like their oriental predecessors, wished to be surrounded by men of proven loyalty from rich zamindar families or heads of religious organizations. In the early years, Sikh durbaris were chosen from the top layer of Sikh society.[2] These worthy gentlemen distinguished themselves by observing throughout their tenures a respectful reticence.[3]

Minto-Morley Reforms, 1909

The first time the elective principle (alongside nomination) was introduced to select representatives for legislative bodies was with the introduction of reforms which went under the joint name of the governor general and the secretary of state as the Minto-Morley reform scheme of 1909. By then the Muslims had succeeded in persuading the not-too-reluctant Minto (who in turn persuaded Morley) that the best way of getting proper Muslim

1 Although the Indian Council Act of 1861 had authorized the setting up of provincial legislatures (and the Act of 1892 further increased their powers), the Punjab did not have a council till 36 years later. The same indifference was shown towards municipal and district board administration. Although the Municipal Act was passed in 1862 and the District Board Act in 1883, people took little interest in the elections; and those who were elected or nominated strictly toed the official line. The *Tribune* described Punjab's city fathers as men who knew no more than to say *jo hukam khudāwand*—Your Lordship's orders will be obeyed. *Tribune*, 14 April 1883.

2 Sikh members of the Punjab council were Baba Sir Khem Singh Bedi, Bhagat Singh, chief secretary of Kapurthala state, Sir Ranbir Singh, and Pratap Singh Ahluwalia. Yuvraj Ripudaman Singh of Nabha and Arjan Singh of Bagarian were nominated to the governor general's council. The prince initiated the Anand Marriage Bill legalizing the Sikh form of marriage (thus excluding Hindu ritual from Sikh weddings). The bill was passed in 1509 when Nabha had been replaced by Sunder Singh Majithia.

3 The silence was broken by Pratap Singh Ahluwalia on 28 February 1907, when he uttered a few carefully prepared sentences on the Colonization Bill. *PLCD*, 28 February 1907.

representation was to have separate electorates, in which only Muslims could vote for Muslims and that the Muslims should be given 'weightage' to offset the Hindu preponderance in numbers. The Chief Khalsa Diwan asked for similar concessions for the Sikhs. The lieutenant governor supported the Diwan and wrote to the viceroy that 'in the Punjab the Sikh community is of the greatest importance and it should be considered whether any and what measures are necessary to ensure its adequate representation.'

No notice was taken of the Khalsa Diwan's representation nor of the lieutenant governor's recommendation. Under the Minto-Morley scheme, the Muslims were conceded separate representation and weightage in the states in which they were a minority as well as at the centre; similar privileges were extended to neither the Hindus nor the Sikhs of the Punjab. Consequently, in the elections that followed, the Sikhs were muscled out by the Muslims or the Hindus[4] and the lieutenant governor had to complete the Sikh quota by nomination.[5]

The Lucknow Pact; Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and the Government of India Act, 1919

The next scheme of constitutional reforms was mooted while the outcome of the First World War was still uncertain. At the time the Sikhs' major preoccupation was with the fortunes of battle and with the proceedings of the Mesopotamia Commission (an enquiry into the breakdown of medical and other facilities for

4 In 1909, the three seats open to election were all carried by Muslims; in 1912, of the six elected, four were won by Hindus, one by a Muslim and one by a Sikh; in 1916, out of eleven elected seats, the Hindus and Muslims obtained five each, a European got the eleventh; the Sikhs were not represented at all.

5 Sunder Singh Majithia was nominated as representative of the Chief Khalsa Diwan, in addition to Pratap Singh Ahluwalia and Gurbaksh Singh Bedi, nominated earlier. In 1913 Daljit Singh of Kapurthala replaced Pratap Singh Ahluwalia, and a fourth man, Gajjan Singh, a lawyer from Ludhiana, was added to the Sikh quota.

the Indian—substantially Sikh—expeditionary force). Meanwhile representatives of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League met at Lucknow and drew up an agreement by which Muslims were conceded separate electorates in seven states in which they were in a minority, given half the elected seats in the Punjab and one-third of the elected seats in the central legislature (elected by a purely Muslim electorate).[6] No Sikh was invited to these confabulations, nor was the Sikh point of view given adequate consideration. To forestall any political change based on the Lucknow Pact, the Chief Khalsa Diwan addressed a memorandum to the lieutenant governor stating that they would not accept a constitution 'which did not guarantee to them [the Sikhs] a share in the provincial and imperial councils as well as in the civil administration of the country, with due regard to their status before the annexation of the Punjab, their present state in the country and their past and present services to the empire. In order that such representation be adequate, effective and consistent with their position and importance, the Sikhs claimed a one-third share in all seats and appointments in the Punjab as their just share: they demanded that their share in the viceroy's and the secretary of state's council should be adequate and fixed on principles of the like nature.'[7]

In August 1917, the secretary of state, Mr Montagu, made his momentous declaration that the aim of British policy was 'the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration' and 'the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government.'[8] When Mr Montagu visited India that autumn,

6 A group of members of the Central Assembly had earlier addressed a note on constitutional reforms to the viceroy, Lord Hardinge; this also contained no safeguards for the Sikhs. The Lucknow Pact was a sequel o this 19-member memorandum.

7 Chief Khalsa Diwan's communication No. 5075 of 26 December 1916 addressed to the chief secretary, Punjab government.

8 Many British officials were critical of this step towards self-government. Sir Michael O'Dwyer was outspokenly hostile.

Maharajah Bhupendra Singh of Patiala conveyed the Sikhs' views to him. A deputation of Sikh leaders also waited on the viceroy (22 November 1917) and pressed their claim to a one-third representation in the Punjab on the basis of their services in the war.

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report issued in the spring of 1918 reassured the Sikhs. Its authors disagreed with the principle of separate representation conceded to the Muslims and expressed regret that it could not be altered. But they felt that what had been given to the Muslims could not in any fairness be denied to the Sikhs. They wrote: 'The Sikhs in the Punjab are a distinct and important people; they supply a gallant and valuable element to the Indian army; but they are everywhere in a minority and experience has shown that they go virtually unrepresented. To the Sikhs therefore, and to them alone we propose to extend the system already adopted in the case of Muhammadans....'[9]

The Chief Khalsa Diwan expressed its appreciation, adding to its resolution the words: 'A minority community cannot allow itself to be swamped by the majority vote, purely on a numerical basis.'[10]

The Montagu-Chelmsford proposals were debated in the joint committee of the Punjab Legislative Council. Mian Fazl-i-Husain tried to push through a resolution that the Muslim proportion in the Punjab Legislative Council be based on the Lucknow Pact. Gajjan Singh proposed that the words 'subject to the just claims of the Sikhs'[11] be added to the resolution. The innocuous amendment was vigorously opposed by both Muslims and Hindu

9 Montagu-Chelmsford Report, *Indian Constitutional Reforms Report*, p. 150.

10 C.K.D. Resolution, 18 September 1918. Also quoted by Gajjan Singh in the *P.L.C.D.*, 21 November 1918, p. 527.

11 Gajjan Singh elucidated what he meant by 'just claims'. He said: 'According to the census figures of 1911 the Sikhs numerically form very nearly 12 per cent of the population of the Punjab (the actual figures being 2,883,729 out of 24,187,750). With regard to the status and importance in the country and the services and sacrifices in the cause of the Empire, however, we occupy a unique position, unapproached and unapproachable by any other community in India. Our strength in the entire Indian Army

members. The chairman drew their attention to the injustice they were doing to the Sikhs. He said: 'You will have justified those among ourselves who contend that Indians are not really fit to manage their own affairs because they cannot consider sectarian questions in an unbiased spirit.... It is perfectly obvious that if this amendment of Sardar Gajjan Singh is laid before this Council, simply because there are only two Sikhs, that it will be lost. Nevertheless it is equally obvious that whatever it may be in form, it is in substance and spirit a perfectly just and fair claim.'

The amendment was put to vote and, as anticipated, lost by six votes to two—the two being Sikhs.[12] Gajjan Singh then moved the resolution that one-third of the seats in the council be reserved for the Sikhs. This resolution met the same fate—the Hindu-Muslim block voting against the Sikhs. Sunder Singh Majithia fared no better in the Imperial Legislative Council: non-official Hindus and Muslims turned a deaf ear to Sikhs' pleadings.

The Chief Khalsa Diwan continued to press for Sikh rights.[13] The only support it received was from the Punjab government, which addressed the Franchise Committee in the following words: 'Their [the Sikhs] influential position in the province,

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is 20 per cent, while among the units recruited from the Punjab, which supplies no less than 60 per cent of the Indian combatants in His Majesty's Army, we supply no less than a third of their entire man-power.... Nearly one-third of the awards made to the entire Indian army during the present war have been won by members of our community. Proportionately the largest numbers of recruits to keep up the fighting strength of the Indian Army have been supplied by us.... It has not been our habit to talk loudly of our services to the Empire or to demand rights and privileges for ourselves from the government, and that may be the reason why hitherto in all the schemes of reform and development of the administrative machinery in this country the Sikhs have suffered considerably in comparison with the more articulate sections of their countrymen.' *PLCD*, 21 November 1918, p. 528.

12 Mian Fazl-i-Husain aimed another barbed shaft at the Sikhs. The Sikhs, he said, had kept aloof from the Lucknow pourparlers because they relied not so much on their rights as upon hopes of favouritism.

13 C.K.D. Resolution 7575 of 24 November 1918.

which is partly based on historical and political factors, partly on their military prestige and partly on their high educational level and economic importance in the central and colony districts, entitles them to a considerably greater degree of representation than is indicated by numbers alone. The number of Sikhs in the army is now believed to exceed 80,000, a proportion far higher than in the case of other communities, and the amount which they pay in the form of land revenue and canal charges is out of all proportion with their numerical strength.'[14]

The Punjab government's note also drew attention to the fact that the proportion of voters was highest among Sikhs and suggested that they be given 5 out of 26 of the non-official seats, that is, 19 per cent representation. The Franchise Committee ignored the suggestion and conceded only 'a separate electoral roll and separate constituencies for the Sikhs'; it was recommended that the Sikhs be given 8 out of 54 (15 per cent) non-official seats. The Chief Khalsa Diwan expressed 'feelings of grave and serious apprehension' at the Franchise Committee's recommendations.

The Government of India Act of 1919 did not give the Sikhs the 33 per cent that they had expected as a reward for their service rendered and their economic importance in the Punjab; in fact it gave them less in the Punjab than it gave to the Muslims in provinces in which they (the Muslims) were a minority.[15] Under the new constitution, the Punjab Legislative Council would comprise 93 members, of whom 15 were to be Sikhs elected by Sikh constituents;[16] the Central Assembly was to have 145 members, of whom three were to be Sikh; the Council of States would have 60 members, of whom one was to be a Sikh.

14 Home-Judicial No. 2120 of 23 November 1918. The Sikhs paid 25 per cent of the Punjab's land revenue and 40 per cent of the land revenue and water tax combined.

15 The Sikhs, who formed 12 per cent of the Punjab, received 18 per cent representation; Muslims, who formed 11 per cent of the population of Bihar and Orissa, received 25 per cent representation.

16 There was provision for nomination by the governor. Three additional Sikhs were nominated to the Council in 1920.

Provincial governments were to have two kinds of executives; one consisting of nominated members to deal with 'reserved subjects' (such as law and order and land revenue) and the other chosen from among the elected members to handle 'transferred subjects'.[17] The governor was to preside over both the executives. The system was described as the double dyarchy of the executive.

The Chief Khalsa Diwan made a last effort (almost six months later than it should have) to influence the British government to revise its decision. A delegation of four Sikhs[18] arrived in London a week after the Joint Parliamentary Committee had made its report. The only satisfaction they could derive was the knowledge that the Committee had on its own initiative increased Sikh representation in the Punjab by two.

The first elections under the new act took place in 1920. The treatment of the Ghadrites, the shooting at Jallianwala, and the tyranny of the martial law regime were fresh in the minds of the people. The nationalists boycotted the elections. The Chief Khalsa Diwan had begun to lose credit in the eyes of the Sikh masses, but no other political party had yet taken its place. With the limited franchise only the well-to do had a vote and could afford to contest. These men were largely independents.[19] The

17 'Subjects which afford most opportunity for local knowledge and social service, those in which Indians have shown themselves to be keenly interested, those in which mistakes that occur, though serious, would not be irremediable, and those which stand most in need of development—e.g. education, agriculture, public health, local government. Over these functions the governor was to exercise powers of "superintendence, direction and control."'

18 The delegates were Shiv Dev Singh Oberoi, Sohan Singh, Sewaram Singh, and Ujjal Singh—the last named became the chief exponent of Sikh views on constitutional matters.

19 Of the elected Sikhs only two could be described as having a semblance of popular support in the community: Mehtab Singh, the Akali leader, who was elected from Lahore and became deputy president of the council, and Dasaundha Singh, a Jat from Ludhiana. Both men were lawyers.

lieutenant governor nominated three others, including Sunder Singh Majithia, as representatives of the Chief Khalsa Diwan. Majithia was nominated to the governor's executive council and entrusted with the care of revenue matters. None of the three Sikhs elected to the Central Assembly had any political affiliations. Jogendra Singh,[20] who was elected to the Council of States, was also a non-party man.

The 1920 elections saw the emergence of the Unionist Party headed by Mian Fazl-i-Husain and Chaudhri Chhotu Ram. The party consisted largely of Muslim landowners and Hindu Jats of Hariana—united in their loyalty to the British and their aversion to urbanite Hindus and Sikhs. Its composition was entirely 'agriculturist,' and its policy was to forward the interest of the 'agricultural' classes. Although the majority of Sikhs were Jats and agriculturists, leaders of the Chief Khalsa Diwan found the racial basis of the Unionists repugnant to the tenets of Sikhism and refused to join the party. Nevertheless a few years later a section of Sikh Jats realized that their Khatri and Arora co-religionists, being more educated, were getting away with the best jobs and threw in their lot with the Unionists. Under Unionist dispensation it was no longer good enough for a Punjabi to be Muslim, Hindu, or Sikh, or to be better qualified for a post; he had to prove that he belonged to an agricultural tribe.

The Sikh Akalis and Nationalists made headway among masses, and in 1923 they were able to capture some seats in the Punjab Legislature. Nevertheless Sunder Singh Majithia was renominated to the lieutenant governor's executive council and reappointed minister of revenue.

20 Jogendra Singh (1877–1946), a Jat of the Baath sub-caste, was a landowner with estates in Uttar Pradesh and in the Montgomery district. He served in Patiala state for some years before coming to the Punjab. In 1926 he became minister of agriculture in the Punjab and thereafter held different ministerial posts for ten years. In July 1942 he was nominated to the governor general's executive council and became member for health, education, and lands. Jogendra Singh wrote a number of books in English. His publications include *Kamla* and *Nur Jehan* (both fiction) and some on Sikh religion.

The Round Table Conferences and the Government of India Act of 1935

The Simon Commission and the Nehru Report

In the autumn of 1927 the British government announced that a commission under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon would be sent to India to review the working of the Government of India Act of 1919. Since no Indians were associated with the commission, both the National Congress and the Muslim League resolved to boycott its deliberations. Consequently when the Commission arrived in India it was greeted with black flags and mobs shouting 'Simon, go back'.[21]

The Punjab Legislative Council nominated a committee under the chairmanship of Sikandar Hayat Khan with Ujjal Singh[22] as secretary to furnish evidence to the commission. A memorandum on Sikh representation[23] was presented to the commission. It said: 'While anxious to maintain their individuality as a separate community they [the Sikhs] are always ready to

21 In many places, the police had forcibly to disperse mobs; at one such melee in Lahore Lajpat Rai was injured. It was popularly believed that the Lala had been assaulted by Inspector Saunders of the Punjab police. Later Saunders was shot dead. Three young men, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev, were convicted of the murder and executed on 23 March 1931. Bhagat Singh became the most famous of all terrorists in the annals of Indian revolutionary history. Mahatma Gandhi wrote, 'there has never been, within living memory, so much romance round any life as had surrounded that of Bhagat Singh.'

22 Ujjal Singh (b. 1895), an Arora of Shahpur district, owned large estates in Multan district. He was elected to the Punjab Legislative Council in 1926, was finance minister in the Sachar government, and remained in the hub of Sikh politics till 1955. In 1965 he was nominated governor of the Punjab.

23 The signatories to the memorandum were Shivdev Singh Oberoi (president of the Chief Khalsa Diwan and member of the Council of States), Harbans Singh of Attari (secretary, Chief Khalsa Diwan), Raghbir Singh Sandhawalia, Sunder Singh Majithia and Mohan Singh Rais of Rawalpindi. *Memorandum on Sikh Representation* to be placed before the Indian Statutory Commission, May 1928.

cooperate with their sister communities for the development of a united nation. They would, therefore, be the first to welcome a declaration that no considerations of caste or religion shall affect the matter of organisation of a national government in the country. They are prepared to stand on merit alone, provided they, in common with others, are permitted to grow unhampered by any impediments, in the way of reservation for any other community.'[24]

If, however, separate representation was to continue, the memorandum demanded that in the Punjab Legislature communal proportions should be fixed as follows—40 per cent Muslim, 30 per cent Hindu, and 30 per cent Sikh. Claim was made for Sikh representation in Sindh (if it was made into a separate province), Delhi, and the North West Frontier Province.

While the commission was at work, the Indian National Congress tried once more (as in 1916) to present the British government with a draft constitution agreeable to Indians. In February 1928 it called a conference of members of all important Indian parties 'to consider and determine the principles of the constitution for India.' The moving spirit behind the conference was Motilal Nehru; his son, Jawaharlal, was secretary. The Sikhs were represented by Mangal Singh Gill. The Nehru Report recommended the abolition of separate electorates but agreed to reservation of seats for Muslims at the centre and in the provinces in which they were a minority; the only other people for whom this concession was recommended were non-Muslims of the North West Frontier Province. Mangal Singh did not press for special rights for his community in his home state or at the centre.[25]

24 Ibid., p. 2.

25 The committee met for over two months. At first Mangal Singh insisted that, if the Muslims were given separate rights, the Sikhs would ask for one-third representation in the Punjab and 5 per cent at the centre. And, if weightage was abolished, he would accept representation on the basis of population with the right to contest other seats. The final decision to give up all communal representation was taken under the inspiration of Dr Ansari. (Author's interview with Mangal Singh Gill.)

The Nehru Report was an impressive exercise in political bargaining. But the Muslims took scant notice of it, and the Sikhs rejected it. One group led by Baba Kharak Singh was so angered by the report that it severed its connection with the Indian National Congress. Others led by Master Tara Singh were equally emphatic in their rejection of the proposals but decided to continue their association with the Congress and so remained in the mainstream of national politics. The Nehru Report found honourable burial in the archives of the National Congress.

The Simon Commission was still drafting its proposals when Lord Irwin announced that a conference of representatives from British India and the Indian States would be convened in London to discuss the question of granting Dominion status to India. The Indian National Congress asked for a declaration that the conference would frame a Dominion constitution for India and not merely discuss when or how it was to be granted. As no such declaration was forthcoming, the Congress decided to abstain from the conference and, at its session in December 1929 at Lahore, passed a resolution in favour of complete independence (instead of Dominion status) for India. Political opinion in England hardened against the nationalists.

In March 1930, the Mahatma launched a campaign to break the law by manufacturing salt, which was a government monopoly. He and most other national leaders were imprisoned. Thus the most important Indian political party was unrepresented at the first London Conference.

In May 1930, the Simon Commission made its report proposing a federal constitution with two houses of legislature at the centre and autonomy for the constituent provinces and the princely states. The recommendations were a step forward in regard to the provinces, where dyarchy was abolished and they became masters of their own homes. But the report did not recommend wider powers for central government. It gave a certain measure of reassurance to the Sikhs: 'It would be unfair that Mohammedans should retain the very considerable weightage they now enjoy in the six provinces and that there should at the same time be imposed, in face of Hindu and Sikh opposition,

a definite Muslim majority in the Punjab and in Bengal unalterable by any appeal to the electorate.'[26]

The recommendations disappointed progressive opinion both in India and in England. In September, the viceroy issued invitations to 66 Indians (50 from British India and 16 from the states) to proceed to London to deliberate on the recommendations. The Sikh invitees (in addition to Bhupendra Singh of Patiala, who was invited as the chancellor of the Chamber of Princes) were Sampuran Singh and Ujjal Singh. The Akalis, the party that really mattered, consisted largely of *jathedārs* incapable of grasping the niceties of constitutional practice; the Akalis tacitly acquiesced in the selection.

The First Round Table Conference

The First Round Table Conference opened in London in November 1930, with Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald in the chair. He outlined the Simon Commission scheme for a federal India; the princes (except Bhupendra Singh of Patiala) expressed willingness to join the federation, The biggest hurdle was communal representation. Sikh delegates agreed to joint electorates with the reservation of seats for minorities, but they strongly opposed communal majorities based on separate electorates.[27] The Muslims were unwilling to accept joint electorates on any terms. Separate electorates won the day—not only for Muslims but also for Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, and the untouchables.

The First Round Table Conference achieved more than either the British government or the participants had anticipated. It encouraged Lord Irwin to extend the hand of friendship to the Mahatma. On 5 March 1931, they signed a pact (known thereafter as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact) whereby nationalists were released from gaol, the passive resistance movement was called off, and Mahatma Gandhi accepted an invitation to go to London for the Second Round Table Conference. He was to be the sole

26 Simon Commission Report, *Indian Statutory Commission Report*, II, 71.
27 The Sikhs' demands were tabulated in 17 points.

representative of the Indian National Congress. The delegates to the first conference were re-invited.

Second Round Table Conference

The Second Round Table Conference met under adverse circumstances. The progressive labour government had been defeated in the elections, and Ramsay MacDonald now presided over a coalition which was largely conservative. Wedgwood Benn had been replaced by the reactionary Samuel Hoare as secretary of state; and, at home, the gentle Irwin had been succeeded by the blimpian Willingdon as viceroy.

The conference bogged down on the question of communal representation. Mahatma Gandhi tried to resolve the issue by private talks outside the conference hall. His efforts were unsuccessful because Mr Jinnah refused to give up separate electorates for the Muslims. On behalf of the Sikhs, Ujjal Singh reiterated their offer to accept joint electorates; but if separate representation was conceded to any community, particularly the Muslims, the Sikhs would insist on getting it as well. He added: 'Unless the communal question, which in the Punjab means the Muslim-Sikh question, is settled, it is not possible for the Sikhs to commit themselves to a federal scheme in which the Punjab would be an autonomous province.'[28]

Ujjal Singh and Sampuran Singh demanded for the Sikhs 30 per cent representation in the Punjab[29] and 5 per cent at the centre, with at least one Sikh member in the central cabinet. Ujjal Singh presented as an alternative a scheme for a territorial readjustment of the Punjab. He proposed that the Rawalpindi

28 *Second Round Table Conference,* Minorities Committee, I, 89.

29 In Bihar and Orissa, the Muslims, who constituted 11 per cent of the population had 25 per cent representation, that is, 130 per cent weightage; in the UP they formed 14.8 per cent of the population and had 30 per cent representation, that is, 100 per cent weightage; in the C.P. they had 4.4 per cent population and had 15 per cent representation, that is, 250 per cent weightage. Anglo-Indians with .02 per cent population of the Punjab had 4000 per cent weightage. The Europeans had even greater weightage.

and Multan divisions (excepting the districts Lyallpur and Montgomery) should be separated from the Punjab and attached to the North West Frontier Province, which would make the communal proportions in the Punjab 43.3 per cent Muslims, 42.3 per cent Hindu, and 14.4 per cent Sikhs. In this Punjab, the Sikhs would not ask for any weightage, and would only ask for it in the North West Frontier Province and Sindh if the Muslims received it in other provinces. This eminently sensible and constructive proposal[30] received scant consideration from the conference and was rejected along with a similar, but from the Sikh point of view less satisfactory, proposal by S. W. G. Corbett, to detach Ambala division from the Punjab and join it to the United Provinces.

In the absence of agreement among the Indian delegates, Ramsay MacDonald assumed the right to adjudicate on joint versus separate electorates and the proportions of communal representation. The Second Round Table Conference was a dismal failure.

The Mahatma returned home to find many of his colleagues in prison. A 'no-rent' campaign had started in the United Provinces; the Red Shirt movement was active in the North West Frontier Province; and terrorists had renewed their activities. The Mahatma protested against Willingdon's repressive measures; Willingdon promptly clamped the Mahatma in gaol.

The Communal Award

On 16 April 1932, Ramsay MacDonald made his award on communal representation. Separate electorates were given to all minorities: Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, as well as the untouchables.[31] The Muslims were given 33.1/3 per cent weightage in the centre and 86 out of 175 seats in the Punjab. The Sikhs

30 For details see *Second Round Table Conference*, Minorities Committee, in, Appendix XVIII, pp. 1435–7.

31 This was later withdrawn under the 'Poona Pact' between the Mahatma and Dr Ambedkar. The untouchables were given heavy weightage in mixed Hindu seats.

were also given weightage but not in the same measure as the Muslims; their position was as follows:

33 out of 175 in the Punjab Assembly;
3 out of 50 in the North West Frontier Province;
6 out of 250 in the Federal Legislative Assembly; and
4 out of 150 in the Council of States.

The Sikhs got nothing in the United Provinces and Sindh, where they had by then sizeable populations.

The award was a bitter blow to the Sikhs. It gave the Muslims a permanent communal majority in the Punjab. Sampuran Singh and Ujjal Singh issued a joint statement strongly criticizing the award and, as a protest, withdrew from the conference.

Third Round Table Conference

The third conference was called to consider the reports of the committees which had been deliberating during the previous months. Only 46 Indians were invited. The Sikh nominee, Tara Singh of Ferozepur, protested against provincial autonomy under a permanent and dominant Muslim majority in the Punjab. He supported safeguards which would provide that measures affecting minorities should not be passed without the consent of three-fifths of the community concerned and be subject to the veto of the governor. He pleaded for weightage in services, a 5 per cent representation in the Federal Legislature, and Sikh representation in Sindh.[32]

The results of the conference were published in the form of a White Paper in March 1933. A joint committee of the two Houses of the British Parliament was set up under Lord Linlithgow (later viceroy of India) to work out the details of the future administration of India.[33]

32 *Third Round Table Conference*, pp. 99–102.

33 Some Indians were invited to collaborate with this committee's deliberations, The Sikhs were represented by Buta Singh Virk, a lawyer from Sheikhupura who was also a member of the Punjab Legislative Council.

The Government of India Act, 1935

On 4 August 1935, the Government of India Act received royal assent. It provided for a Federation of Indian Provinces and Princely States with two Houses of Parliament in the centre: the Central Legislative Assembly and the Council of States. Six of the larger provinces were to have two legislatures of their own; the rest, including the Punjab, only one. About 11.5 per cent of the population was enfranchised, giving 30 million people the right to vote. While the provinces were made masters in their homes (subject to the reservation of special powers of intervention by governors), the Central Government remained as before under the control of the governor general. Dyarchy, which had been abolished in the provinces, was introduced in the centre. Subjects such as defence and foreign affairs were to be 'reserved' and therefore the prerogative of the governor general.

The Indian National Congress rejected the Government of India Act of 1935, because of the powers of intervention given to governors in the provinces and the dyarchy in the centre. It resolved to capture power and then destroy the constitution. The Muslim League followed suit but reserved the right to try out the provincial scheme 'for what it was worth'. The princes who had shown such alacrity in accepting federation got cold feet when they realized it would mean surrendering some of their 'sovereignty'. Sikh political parties had already condemned the communal award; they added their voice to the chorus of denunciation. For all practical purposes, the Government of India Act of 1935 was a stillborn child.

The first elections under the new act were held in the winter of 1936–7. The Sikhs had the choice of backing either the Congress or the Unionists. They rejected both: the Congress because of its predominantly anti-Sikh Arya Samaj leadership; the Unionists because, despite their championing the cause of the agriculturists (which found favour in the eyes of Sikh agriculturists), their primary interest was the Mussulman Jat; the Sikh and Hindu Jat was of secondary importance. They could have formed alliances with one or the other political party, but

none of the leaders had the foresight or the following to do so. Instead they split their forces into the Akali and the anti-Akali group (known as the Khalsa National party), both of minor importance in provincial affairs and of none whatsoever on the national scene.

In all provinces except Bengal, Sindh, and the Punjab, the Indian National Congress swept the polls. Its poorest performance was in the Punjab, where it got a bare 10 per cent of the vote. Out of the total of 175 seats, the Unionists won 96 and the Khalsa Nationalist party won 15–30 (some members constantly changed their allegiance); the rest were shared by the Congress, Muslim League, Communists, and Independents. Sikandar Hayat Khan chose his cabinet of three Muslims, two Hindus, and one Sikh (Sunder Singh Majithia). The rural-Jat bias was in evidence as before; of the six ministers only one of the Hindus was an urban non-agriculturist.

The Unionist ministry did not have an easy time. Rumours of an impending war with Hitlerite Germany and the increased tempo of the nationalist movement indicated a change in the political barometer. People knew India would soon be free; but who would be masters of the Punjab—the Muslims or the Sikhs?[34]

34 The uncertainty bred suspicion and hate; occasionally the hate exploded into violence. The most serious example of this was in 1938 over the possession of Shahidganj—the martyrs' market (the notorious *nakhās* referred to in Volume I—claimed by Muslims to be a mosque, by the Sikhs to be a gurdwara. The Sikhs won their case in the High Court but not before many Muslims had been shot by the police and a few thousand imprisoned for defying the law.

Srinagar
JAMMU & KASHMIR
HIMACHAL PRADESH
TIBET
PAKISTAN
Gurdaspur
Hoshiarpur
Amritsar
Lahore
Jullundur
Simla
Ludhiana
Ferozepore
PUNJABI SUBA
Chandigarh
Patiala
Ambala
Dehra Dun
UTTAR PRADESH
Karnal
Hissar
Meerut
HARYANA
Moradabad
Delhi
RAJASTHAN
Gurgaon
0 50 100
Kilometres
Aligarh
Mathura

PART V

POLITICS OF PARTITION: INDEPENDENCE AND THE DEMAND FOR A SIKH HOMELAND

In March 1940, the Muslim League passed a resolution demanding a sovereign Muslim state which would comprise the predominantly Muslim areas of India including most of the Punjab. The Sikhs were deeply disturbed by this demand: the course of Sikh-Muslim relations over the centuries had created distrust of Muslim intentions in their minds. The only alternatives for the Sikhs were either to align themselves with the Indian National Congress and resist the Muslim demand for the partition of India or to strive for a state of their own.

During the war years (1939–45) Sikh politicians waged a losing battle against the movement for the formation of Pakistan. When the Muslims won, the Sikhs of western Punjab had to abandon their homes, lands, and shrines, and migrate to India. Dissatisfaction with the treatment they received from the Government of India and the resurgence of Hinduism gave an impetus to the demand for a Sikh homeland.

15. Sikhs and World War II (1939–45)

Indian Politics During the 'Phony War' 1939–40

On 3 September 1939, Great Britain declared war on Nazi Germany. The viceroy issued a proclamation to the same effect on behalf of India. Although the Indian National Congress expressed repugnance for Fascism, it protested that Indians had not been consulted before being committed to the war. The Muslim League was also critical of the viceroy's declaration. But Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan and the Unionist Muslims—who were technically members of the League—expressed their unreserved support for Britain. For the Sikh leaders, the war created a crisis of conscience; their loyalty to the Raj had been diluted by the events of the preceding twenty years, but they did not wish their community to lose its coveted position in the armed forces. Unlike the Congressite or the Muslim Leaguer who had no influence over the martial sections of the populace, the Sikh politician had to be both a political guide and a recruiting agent.

The titled gentry of the Chief Khalsa Diwan promptly declared their support for Britain. Congressite Sikhs followed the Congress line of sympathy-but-no-support. Communists, who had acquired influence in the central districts, adhered to the party line of regarding the war in Europe as imperialist; their agents busied themselves disseminating anti-war propaganda among Sikh soldiers. The Akalis, who mattered more than all the other

parties put together, were the most confused. The leaders, most of whom had served terms of imprisonment during the gurdwara agitation, had little love for the British. They were equally hostile to the Muslim Leaguers and to the pro-British Unionists. But they wished to preserve the numerical strength of the Sikhs in the armed services so that when the day of reckoning came, the Khalsa would have an army of its own. The Akali party agreed to help the government and pressed for more Sikh recruitment; at the same time it carped at the administration over matters of little import, for example, non-availability of *jhatkā* (non-kosher) meat at railway stations, refusal of gaol authorities to allow Sikh convicts to wear kirpans, etc.

The unenthusiastic support of the Akalis and the antagonism of the Communists during the 'imperialist' phase of the war was reflected in the reluctance of Sikh peasants to enlist and disaffection in some regiments. A Sikh squadron of the Central India Horse refused to go overseas; over a hundred were court-martialled, and a few executed. Some Sikhs of the gist Punjab regiment deserted. Sikhs of the Royal Indian Army Supply Corps, serving in Africa, refused to load stores on the plea that they were not 'coolies'. These and similar incidents compelled the authorities to put a temporary ban on the recruitment of Sikhs. A committee was appointed to look into the situation. It found evidence of Communist infiltration in the ranks and also a pervading sense of uneasiness among the Sikhs concerning the Unionist Ministry's alignment with the Muslim League, which had begun to talk of a Muslim state in the Punjab. Sikh 'grievances' were redressed; assurances were given to the leaders that Sikh interests would not be sacrificed to appease the Muslims. A Khalsa Defence of India League under the chairmanship of the maharajah of Patiala was organized to step up recruitment. The ban on the enlistment of Sikhs was lifted.[1]

1 The enquiry was suggested by the secretary of the Defence Ministry, Sir Charles O'Gilvy, who had served in the Punjab. It consisted of officers well acquainted with the Sikhs: Brigadier General A. E. Barstow (Chairman), Major A. J. M. Kilroy (36th Sikhs), Major A. E. Farwell (Ludhiana

The issue was, however, more complicated than a simple 'for' or 'against' the British war effort. The Sikhs had also to make terms with their fellow Indians—the Hindus, most of whom supported the Congress, and the Muslims, most of whom were emotionally aroused by the notion of an independent Muslim state. It was in the negotiations with their own countrymen that Sikh leaders betrayed confusion and the absence of a precise Sikh point of view. The Viceroy's efforts to elicit cooperation of Indian political parties in the prosecution of the war failed. On the resignation of Congress ministries, the governors took over the administration in seven provinces. Only in four provinces was the Muslim League (in the Punjab, the Unionists) able to carry on the business of government through elected representatives. While the Muslim League eagerly filled the power vacuum, the Congress reaffirmed its decision to non-cooperate with the war effort and went further into the wilderness. A group led by Subhas Chandra Bose and Sardul Singh Caveeshar (d. 1963) broke away from the parent body to organize more active opposition to the British. A few days later, the Muslim League in a session at Lahore formally resolved that its aim was an independent Muslim state.[2]

Sikhs), Major 'Billy' Short (47th Sikhs), and Captain Narinjan Singh Gill, who later joined the Japanese-sponsored Indian National Army. Members of the commission individually toured Sikh districts and discussed the difficulties of soldiers with retired Sikh officers. They also had meetings with political leaders.

2 The Lahore resolution did not use the word *Pakistan* but the intention was abundantly clear: 'that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or be acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, namely, that *geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial adjustments as may be necessary*, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as the northwestern and eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute "independent states," in which the constituent units should be autonomous and sovereign.' (Emphasis added.)

The words in italics were rightly interpreted by non-Muslims to indicate that the Muslim League did not want the whole of the Punjab but was willing to exclude the eastern half, which was predominantly non-Muslim.

Mr Jinnah assured the Sikhs that they had nothing to fear. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, who had sponsored the original draft of the Lahore resolution, tried further to allay the suspicions of non-Muslims. He said: 'We do not ask for freedom that there may be Muslim Raj here and Hindu Raj elsewhere. If that is what Pakistan means I will have nothing to do with it.... If you want real freedom for the Punjab, that is to say a Punjab in which every community will have its due share in the economic and administrative fields as partners in a common concern, then that Punjab will not be Pakistan, but just Punjab, land of five rivers; Punjab is Punjab and will always remain Punjab whatever anybody may say. This then, briefly, is the political future which I visualise for my province and for my country under any new constitution.'[3]

This verbal jugglery did not impress the Sikh leaders. On the contrary, they were convinced that the Muslim Unionist was only the Dr Jekyll aspect of the Muslim League's Mr Hyde, and that Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan was just another double-faced politician.

The Sikhs found themselves in a tricky situation. They were faced with two rival freedom movements: one led by the National Congress for the freedom of the country as a whole; the other led by the Muslim League for an independent Muslim state involving a division of the country which would inevitably cut across the land in which the Sikhs lived. Congress leaders, much as they desired to have the Sikhs on their side, were unwilling to concede to them the privileges they enjoyed under British rule. On the contrary, in the shape of things envisaged by the nationalists, separate electorates and privileges based on race or religion were to be abolished. The League promised little; and even in that little the Sikhs placed no faith. What course of action could the Sikhs follow? Obtain the best terms they could from the Congress and support a free, united India? Exploit Congress-League differences and extract concessions from both? Or, ignore both the Congress and the League and strive for an

3 *PLCD*, 11 March 1941.

autonomous state of their own? Some politicians advocated one line of policy; others the absolute opposite. Events began to move so fast that they had little time to sit back, take stock of the situation, and then present a united front of Sikh political opinion.

The political stalemate in India ended with the conclusion of the 'phoney war' in Europe. In April 1940 the Nazis overran Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium and smashed through the Franco-British defences. French resistance collapsed; Britain avoided a near disaster at Dunkirk. In May, Winston Churchill took over as prime minister with L. S. Amery as his secretary of state for India.

Lord Linlithgow resumed his efforts to resolve the Indian deadlock. In August he offered to expand his Executive Council and establish a War Advisory Council with Indian members; he proposed a new constitution with appropriate safeguards for minorities on the successful termination of the war. Both the Congress and the Muslim League rejected the 'August offer'. The Congress went further and started another civil disobedience movement. In January 1941, Subhas Chandra Bose disappeared from his home in Calcutta. Some weeks later his voice was heard over Berlin radio exhorting his countrymen to rise against the British.

In the summer of 1941, the war entered a critical phase. Fascist powers invaded Yugoslavia and Greece. Germany attacked Russia, and Nazi armour smashed its way towards Moscow. General Rommel threatened the Middle East; Arab followers of the Mufti of Jerusalem declared for the Axis powers.

The succession of reverses suffered by the Allies cast gloom over India. How long would it be before the British capitulated? Would the Fascists take over India? Would there be a civil war between the Hindus and the Muslims? These were the sort of questions people asked each other. The Sikhs became restive. There were rumours of a Khalsa uprising against the Unionist administration. At a largely attended meeting in Amritsar, resolutions were passed denouncing the Unionist Ministry's Muslim

Raj. Having thus let off steam, the leaders relapsed into a sullen and confused silence.

Lord Linlithgow abandoned his efforts to bring round the Congress and the League. In July 1941, he announced that he would enlarge his Executive Council from seven to twelve members, of whom eight would be Indians. He also set up a National Defence Council of 30 members, Two Sikhs[4] were nominated to the Defence Council and a year later Sir Jogendra Singh was invited to take over the education portfolio in the Executive Council.

Sikh Attitude to the War in Asia: The Indian National Army

Some months before Pearl Harbour (7 December 1941), Japanese agents had established contacts with leaders of Indian communities in Thailand, China, Hong Kong, Cambodia, the Philippines, Burma, Malaya, and Singapore. The Indian population of these countries was estimated to be well over two million and known to be hostile to the British. The Japanese chose Rash Bihari Bose to win Indian collaboration. Bose's name commanded the respect of patriotic Indians and, because of his earlier association with the Ghadr rebellion, he was held in special esteem by the Sikhs. Since 1915 he had lived in Japan and had married the daughter of the chief of the Black Dragon Society. Rash Bihari had persuaded the Japanese government to agree that, in the event of a war with England, Indians would not be treated as enemy subjects and captured but that Indian army personnel would be turned over to him. Major Fujiwara of the Japanese intelligence was appointed liaison officer; his bureau came to be named after him as the Fujiwara Kikan.

Rash Bihari Bose showed a marked preference for Sikhs.[5]

4 The maharajah of Patiala and Naunihal Singh Mann were nominated to the Defence Council.

5 In Thailand his collaborators were Amar Singh (who had spent nearly twenty years in British gaols), Gyani Pritam Singh, who was the granthī of the gurdwara at Bangkok, and Chanda Singh, a rubber planter in Yah.

He established contacts with Sikh organizations in Thailand and Malaya and with granthīs attached to Sikh regiments.[6]

Rash Bihari Bose followed in the wake of the advancing Japanese armies. Wherever he went, he set up branches of his Indian Independence League.

Japanese armies pushed across the Thai-Malayan border and defeated the British-Indian forces opposing them. Among the thousands of Indians captured was Captain Mohan Singh[7] of the 1st/14th Punjab Regiment, Mohan Singh offered his services to the Japanese commander.

Indian prisoners of war in the camp at Alor Star were placed at the disposal of Mohan Singh. He was elevated to the rank of general and made commanding officer of the newly raised Indian National Army (hereafter referred to by its initials as the INA). The first brigade of the INA spearheaded the Japanese assault on Singapore, which was captured on 15 February 1942.

At Singapore 45,000 Indian prisoners of war were assembled. Of the 20,000 who volunteered to join the INA, a high proportion were Sikhs.[8] General Mohan Singh set up his headquarters at Singapore, next door to the offices of the Fujiwara Kikan. He

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These men were members of the 'Bharat Culture Lodge' of Bangkok run by Swami Satyanand Puri. In Malaya, Bose's chief supporter was Budh Singh, known popularly as the 'Malayan Gandhi'.

6 Members of the Shanghai Revolutionary Party—all Sikhs—had succeeded in converting granthīs of Sikh regiments posted at Hong Kong. Three granthīs attached to a Sikh infantry battalion were deported to India early in 1941.

In April 1941, Gyani Pritam Singh and Chanda Singh sent three Sikh agents into Malaya. These men were apprehended and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment by the Supreme Court of Kotah Baru. They were later released from Singapore by the Japanese.

7 Mohan Singh (b.1909) of village Ugoke (Sialkot district), a Jat of Ghuman sub-caste, joined the army in 1927 as a common sepoy.

8 Among the Sikh officers were Colonel Narinjan Singh Gill, Major Mahabir Singh Dhillon, Major Nripendra Singh Bhagat, Captain Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon, and Captain Thakar Singh. According to Ishar Singh Narula, later finance minister of the provisional government, more than 50 per cent of the INA were Sikh; according to General Mohan Singh, only one-third—the remaining two-thirds being Pathans, Dogras, and Hindu

called on Field Marshal Count Terauchi at Saigon to rind out the precise role that the Japanese had in mind for the INA. He was told that Rash Bihari Bose had called a meeting in Tokyo, where the matter would be discussed.

The Tokyo Conference[9] (28 March 1942) resolved that 'independence, complete and free from foreign domination and control of whatever nature, shall be the object of the movement.' Another resolution stated that 'military action against India was to be taken only by INA together with such military, naval and air cooperation and assistance as may be requested from the Japanese authorities by the Council of Action of the Indian Independence League.' The prime minister of Japan, General Tojo, took personal interest in the deliberations of the conference. The delegates agreed to meet again at Bangkok. (The choice of Thailand, an independent neutral country, as venue of the next conference was deliberate.)

The Bangkok Conference (15 June 1942) was attended by representatives of Indian communities of Asian countries. General Mohan Singh was accompanied by 30 officers. Representatives of the Axis powers and the Thai foreign minister were also present. The conference reiterated the demand that the Japanese government make a firm declaration of its policy towards India.

The Japanese government did not react favourably to the Bangkok resolutions. On the contrary, Colonel Iwaguro, who had succeeded Colonel Fujiwara as liaison officer, said quite bluntly that his government did not intend to make any more statements. Other things caused Mohan Singh to doubt the good faith

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Jats. (Author's interview with Ishar Singh Narula and General Mohan Singh, 24 June 1962.)

Narinjan Singh (b. 1906), a Jat of the Gill sub-caste from village Majitha (district Amritsar), was educated at Sandhurst and received the King's Commission in 1925. After the events narrated in the text, Gill was appointed Indian ambassador to Ethiopia (1955) and then to Thailand.

9 The conference had an inauspicious beginning. The plane carrying Swami Satyanand Puri and Gyani Pritam Singh crashed, and all its passengers were killed.

of the Japanese: they censored INA's radio broadcasts; their treatment of Indian prisoners had become harsh; despite promises to the contrary, they had taken over Indian evacuee property in Burma; the Japanese commander of Singapore assumed direct control of INA personnel; and attempts were made to 'nipponize' the 1st Division of the INA Mohan Singh's relations with the too-nipponized Rash Bihari Bose cooled. The Council of Action again submitted a memorandum to Colonel Iwaguro demanding official recognition of the Indian Independence League, the Council of Action, the INA, and an unequivocal statement on Japanese policy towards India. Iwaguro lost patience. 'When work is to be done, there is no time to think of legal quibbles,' he retorted.

Mistrust grew on either side. The Japanese had reason to suspect some of Mohan Singh's colleagues, particularly Narinjan Singh Gill, who had been put in charge of Burma. The climax came in December 1942, when Gill was arrested. Mohan Singh dissolved the INA and resigned. He too was put under arrest.[10] With the disappearance of these men, Sikh enthusiasm for the INA waned.

Rash Bihari Bose tried to reconstitute the INA; but the spirit had gone out of the men. He retired from the scene in June 1943, when Subhas Chandra Bose arrived from Germany. Subhas took over the presidency of the Indian Independence League and became supreme commander of the INA.

Subhas Bose[11] held a rally at Singapore, where he announced the establishment of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind

10 After two months of detention in a bungalow, the general was taken to an Island where he was kept till December 1943 and then sent to Sumatra, where the British rearrested him. He was brought to Delhi in November 1945 and released unconditionally in May 1946. In 1962 he was elected member of the Rajya Sabha.

11 Subhas Chandra Bose (1897–1945) was born in Cuttack in Orissa. After graduating from Calcutta University, he took a tripos from Cambridge and entered the Indian Civil Service. He resigned the service on his return to India and joined the Civil Disobedience Movement under Mahatma Gandhi. He was elected president of the National Congress in 1938 and again in 1939 against Mahatma Gandhi's wishes. He disagreed

(Free India), consisting of himself as the head of state with four ministers and eight representatives of the armed forces.[12] The Provisional government of Azad Hind was recognized by the Axis powers and their satellites. It declared war on Britain and the United States of America.

As the tide of war turned, the Japanese became more co-operative with Subhas Bose's INA than they had been with Mohan Singh's. *Netājī* (beloved leader), the title by which Subhas came to be addressed, was treated with marked distinction when he arrived in Tokyo in November 1943 to attend the Great East Asia Nations Conference. The Andamans and the Nicobar Islands were transferred to the Azad Hind Government.

Subhas Bose moved his headquarters to Rangoon, and the INA was sent to the Burma-India front. Early in February 1944 it fought the British forces and succeeded in forcing its way into Indian territory. There was great jubilation at Netaji's headquarters.

For the next two months, the INA kept up its offensive on the Arrakan front aimed at the capture of Imphal. By May the offensive had slowed to a standstill. And by the time the monsoons broke, the British had wrested the initiative, and the INA was on the retreat. It was badly fed, ill-equipped, and outnumbered. The Japanese did not provide it with heavy armour, artillery, or air support. Of the force of 6000 that had set out to capture Imphal, over 1500 either deserted to the British or surrendered without a fight; only 400 fell in battle; 1500 more died of disease or starvation. The majority of those who returned to base had to be hospitalized.

The poor performance of the INA was a great disappointment for Netaji, but he did not give up hope. By the time the monsoon

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with the Mahatma's pacifism and formed the Forward Bloc of radicals. He was arrested in July 1940. He escaped from house arrest and made his way to Germany by the overland route. For an excellent biography, see *The Springing Tiger* by Hugh Toye.

12 In the Provisional government two officers, Nripendra Singh Bhagat and Lieutenant Colonel Gulzara Singh, and one civilian, Ishar Singh Narula of Bangkok, were Sikhs.

was over, he had another two brigades trained for battle. In January 1945, the INA fought its second round with the British 14th Army on the Irrawady. The performance of the second INA force was poorer than that of the first. Desertions and surrenders depleted its number. By the middle of May, the 'heroic' epic of the INA came to an inglorious end.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose retreated from Rangoon to Singapore and from Singapore to Bangkok. On 18 August 1945, the plane carrying him to Tokyo crashed in flames, ending his flamboyant career.

Cripps Mission, March–April, 1942

While Japanese armies were storming across Asia, the political barometer in India continued to register 'no change'. The viceroy freed the Congress leaders but failed to win their hearts. Even in the spring of 1942 when Japanese and INA brigades were poised on the Indo-Burmese border and Japanese planes dropped bombs on Calcutta and Madras, neither the Congress nor the Muslim League realized the peril to the country. The British government did; it sent out Sir Stafford Cripps, who was much admired in India, to persuade the Indians to co-operate.

Master Tara Singh, Baldev Singh,[13] Sir Jogendra Singh and Ujjal Singh were chosen to represent the Sikh community. An All Parties Sikh Conference was convened in Delhi (26 March) to brief the representatives. Sir Stafford's draft of proposals had already been circulated. It contained an undertaking on behalf

13 Baldev Singh (1902–61), a Jat of Chokar sub-caste of village Dumana (district Ambala), was the son of a wealthy steel magnate. He made his debut in Sikh politics in 1937, when he was elected to the Punjab Assembly. He financed many ventures of the Akali party, including the Sikh National College at Lahore. In June 1942 he entered into an agreement known as the 'Sikander-Baldev Pact' with the Unionists, whereby the Akalis called off their agitation against Sikander Hayat's government. One of the terms of the agreement provided his replacing Dasaunda Singh in the Punjab Cabinet. Baldev Singh was the Sikh representative in the negotiations for the transfer of power and became the first defence minister of Nehru's government. He remained at the helm of Sikh affairs till 1957, when he was replaced by Swaran Singh.

of his government that as soon as the war was over a body of elected Indians would be invited to frame a new constitution for India. There was provision that if any province wished to opt out of the Indian Union it could do so. The Congress party declined to accept the offer on the issue of the apportionment of control of the Defence Department. Mr Jinnah rejected it because, according to him, Pakistan was not conceded.

Sikh spokesmen, on the other hand, construed the proposals as conceding Pakistan.[14] In their note they stated that the cause of the Sikh community had been lamentably betrayed 'by the provision for separation of provinces and the constitution of Pakistan.' The note continued: 'We have lost all hope of receiving any consideration. We shall, however, resist by all possible means separation of the Punjab from an all India Union.'[15]

The Sikhs began to pin their faith in the Congress because Congressites ranging from Mahatma Gandhi down to the humblest volunteer had sworn that they would never suffer the dismemberment of the country. A few days after Sir Stafford Cripps' departure, Sikh faith was rudely shaken. A group of members of the Madras Legislative Assembly belonging to the Congress party passed a resolution that the Muslim claim for a separate state should be conceded. The leader of this group was C. Rajagopalachari, one of the most respected elders of the organization who also enjoyed the confidence of Gandhi. The working committee of the Congress disapproved of the resolution and compelled Rajagopalachari to resign. The wedge had however been driven; it only needed hammering by the Muslim League to split the unity of India.

The National Congress climaxed its obduracy by launching in August 1942 a campaign to force the English to 'Quit India'. Mahatma Gandhi and all leading Congressmen were arrested; the Congress party was declared illegal. Attempts were made in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to pull up rail lines in order

14 At a press conference (29 March), Sir Stafford was asked whether the proviso enabling a province to opt out of the Indian Union meant that Pakistan had been conceded; his reply was a categorical 'no'.

15 Master Tara Singh's letter to Sir Stafford Cripps, 31 March 1942.

to sever communications with the eastern front. The government had little difficulty in suppressing the movement. The Punjab remained peaceful; the arrests of Congressmen went practically unnoticed. The viceroy turned to other parties willing to collaborate in the war effort. The ban on the Communist party was lifted. An overwhelming majority of Punjabi Communists were Sikhs. They took over a large building in Lahore, and began to publish propaganda literature in many languages, including Gurmukhi. Their weekly *jaṅg-i-azādī* (war for freedom) and pamphlets supported the Muslim demand for Pakistan.

The Muslim League had the field to itself. The last obstacle to Mr Jinnah's ambition of unquestioned leadership of the Muslims was removed by the death of Sir Sikander Hayat Khan (December 1942). In the summer of 1943 yet another blow was struck for Pakistan when the Muslim League succeeded in forming a ministry in the North West Frontier Province.[16] Only in the Punjab, Sir Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana (who succeeded Sir Sikander Hayat) qualified his subscription to the aims of the Muslim League by adhering to the notion of a united Punjab. Mr Jinnah brought the full pressure of his organization to bear on the Unionists. He came to Lahore and demanded that Khizr Hayat Khan abandon the title 'Unionist' and describe his government as a 'Muslim League coalition'. Khizr refused. His Muslim following began to dwindle till the ministry was reduced to relying on the support of a handful of Unionists backed by Congressites and Akalis.

Meanwhile C. Rajagopalachari drove the Pakistani wedge further into the heart of United India. On 10 July 1944, he published his famous 'formula' by which, if the Muslim League supported the demand for immediate independence, a commission would be appointed to demarcate those contiguous districts in the north-west and north-east of India where Muslims were in an absolute majority; in those areas a plebiscite would determine whether the people wanted a separate state or to remain in India. It was claimed by Rajagopalachari that Mahatma

16 The Congress party ousted the League on 12 March 1945, but its position was never secure.

Gandhi (released in May 1944) agreed with him. Considering the position occupied by these two men in Congress circles, the Sikhs assumed that Congress had conceded Pakistan.

The Sikhs reacted violently to the Rajagopalachari-Gandhi acquiescence. At a meeting (20 August 1944) at Amritsar attended by leaders of all Sikh parties, speeches were made strongly criticizing Mahatma Gandhi's leadership ('Let us give up now the practice of looking up to Mr Gandhi for the protection of our interests'—Gyani Kartar Singh).[17] Master Tara Singh stated for the first time that the Sikhs were a separate nation.[18] Nevertheless, a resolution demanding 'a Sikh independent sovereign state' was rejected as an 'impossible demand'. Ujjal Singh and Gyani Kartar Singh said explicitly that the 'Azad Punjab' scheme was only a counterblast to Pakistan. Master Tara Singh was empowered to organize Sikh opposition to the division of the Punjab and September 3rd was fixed as 'protest day'.[19] Tara

17 'If Pakistan is foisted upon the Sikhs with the help of British bayonets, we will tear it into shreds as Guru Gobind Singh tore up the Mughal Empire.' Gyani Kartar Singh, *Civil and Military Gazette*, 21 August 1944.

Gyani Kartar Singh (b. 1905), a Dhillon Jat born in village Nagoke (Amritsar) but settled in Chak 40 (Lyallpur), joined the Akali movement at the age of 19. He was elected to the Punjab Assembly in 1937; and president of the Akali Dal in 1946. He was considered the brains behind the Akali party and the propounder of the Akali concept of the Sikh state. He was a close collaborator of Master Tara Singh—and often his bitterest opponent. After independence, the Gyani was often a member of the Punjab government. There will be frequent references to him in the text.

18 'Azad Punjab' had, however, been mentioned earlier in Akali conferences in September 1942 and March 1943. Master Tara Singh, addressing a conference of the Akali Dal in June 1943, said: 'In the Azad Punjab the boundaries should be fixed after taking into consideration the population, property, and revenue and historical traditions of each of the communities.... If the new demarcations are effected on the above principles then the Azad Punjab comprises of Ambala, Jullundur, Lahore divisions and out of Multan division Lyallpur district, some portion of Montgomery and Multan districts.' *Indian Annual Register*, 1943, Vol. 1, p. 298.

19 *Civil and Military Gazette*, 21 August 1944. Protest Day was marked by closure of business, processions and meetings where resolutions condemning the Pakistan demand were passed.

Singh appointed a subcommittee to create effective liaison with other Sikh groups to form a united front.[20]

End of War

On 7 May 1945, Nazi Germany laid down arms. The Japanese were retreating on all fronts. The Government of India felt the time had come to make another attempt to win over Indian politicians to its side. Congress leaders were released. Lord Wavell, who had taken over as viceroy, invited twenty-one Indian leaders, including Master Tara Singh, to meet him. The Cripps proposals were renewed in case it was found that they facilitated a long-term solution, but the immediate plan was to form a new Executive Council composed (except for the viceroy and the commander-in-chief) entirely of Indians—external affairs relating to British India to be handled in future by an Indian.

The leaders met at Simla in the last week of June 1945, but the conference broke down on the insistence of Jinnah that Leaguers only should represent Indian Muslims on the Executive Council—a claim which was untenable.

Jinnah's stand at Simla convinced many Congress leaders of the futility of trying to collaborate with the Muslim League. Nevertheless some of them recognized that Muslim Leaguers would have to be given the right to secede if they so desired, 'provided they did not drag others who did not want to do so.'[21] In other words, if this were conceded, the Punjab (and Bengal) would have to be divided; the carving knife was firmly placed on the Sikhs' jugular vein.

20 Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr Jayakar made yet another attempt to solve the communal issue. Since the Muslims refused to co-operate, the Sapru Committee's labours were of little practical importance. A memorandum of the Sikh case was prepared by Ujjal Singh, and a delegation consisting of Master Tara Singh, Sampuran Singh, Gyani Kartar Singh, Ishar Singh Majhail, and Udham Singh Nagoke argued the Sikh case.

21 Jawaharlal Nehru at a press conference on 29 August 1945. *Tribune*, 30 August 1945.

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16. Prelude to the Partition of India

General Elections of 1945–6

The elections of the winter of 1945–6 were the most momentous in the history of India. The socialist government of England was determined to give India independence and was eager to find a body of men to whom power could be transferred. Members of the existing legislatures did not qualify for this role as they did not reflect the views of the people on the vital issue of whether India was to remain united or divided: the central assembly had been elected in 1934, the provincial legislatures in 1936. Consequently, the British government decided to have fresh elections and from the men returned form a Constituent Assembly to frame a constitution for free India.

The Congress party sensed the importance of this election and made an all out bid to persuade the electorate to vote for a free and united India. It was confident of winning the non-Muslim vote; but did not want to take any chances. It knew that the 'feats' of the INA had excited the imagination of the people. Consequently, Mr Nehru, despite his earlier differences with Subhas Chandra Bose and his reservations regarding collaboration with fascist powers, acclaimed men of the INA as fighters for freedom.[1] The government unwittingly played into

1 'I was of the opinion three years ago and am still of the opinion that the leader and others of this army had been misguided in many ways and had failed to appreciate the larger consequences of their informal association with the Japanese.' Jawaharlal Nehru, *Statesman*, 20 August 1945.

the hands of the nationalists by charging with treason three officers—a Hindu, a Muslim, and a Sikh—and trying them in the historic Red Fort of Delhi, the hub of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Nehru personally organized the defence and, after the officers were acquitted, arranged for them to tour the country. Wherever they went they were greeted by mammoth crowds shouting the INA's war cries—'*Jai Hind*' (Victory to India) and '*Delhi calo*' (onward to Delhi). Elections followed a few weeks later.

Although the Congress party won a spectacular victory at the polls, it failed to dislodge the Muslim League's hold on the Muslim masses. The League went to the polls on the issue of Pakistan and won every single Muslim seat in the Central Legislature. Even in the provinces (except in the North West Frontier Province) it carried 90 per cent of the Muslim electorate with it. The position could be summarized simply: the non-Muslims wanted a united India; Muslims wanted India to be divided to make Pakistan.

The Sikhs had gone to the polls to register their opposition to Pakistan. A *Panthic Pratinidhi* board representing all parties save the Communists was constituted to fight the elections. The Panthic party carried the Sikh electorate with it.[2] Communists, who were the only Sikh group supporting Pakistan, were completely eliminated.

Lord Wavell did not mince his words in describing the INA as a body of renegades who had proved false to their oath. 'Whatever your political views, if you cannot acclaim the man who prefers his honour to his ease, who remains steadfast in adversity to his pledged faith, then you have a poor notion of the character which is required to build up a nation. I say to you that amongst all the exploits of the last five or six years for which the world rightly extols the Indian soldier, the endurance of those men in captivity and hardship stands as high as any. As a proof of what they endured as the price of their loyalty to their ideals of a soldier's duty, I will tell you this: the 45,000 Indian prisoners of war who stood firm are estimated to have lost about 11,000 or one quarter of their numbers from disease, starvation and murder; the 20,000 who went to our enemy's side lost only 1500 or 7½ per cent.' Lord Wavell, *Statesman*, 11 December 1945.

2 The elected men formed a Panthic party in the Punjab Assembly. Baldev Singh (development minister) was elected leader; Ujjal Singh and Swaran Singh, deputy leaders, and Ajit Singh, secretary.

The situation that emerged in the Punjab was as follows: out of a total of 175 seats, the Muslim League secured 79, the Congress 51, Panthic candidates 22, Unionists and Independents 10 each (there were by-elections in the remaining three). Negotiations between the Muslim League, the Congress, and the Panthic Sikhs failed chiefly on the issue of Pakistan. Ultimately, Sir Khizr Hayat Khan re-formed the government with Congress and Panthic support.

Cabinet Mission

In the spring of 1946, Mr Attlee, the Labour prime minister, announced that a team of cabinet ministers would visit India to discuss the next step towards Indian independence. In a debate on the subject a month later, he stated: 'We are mindful of the rights of minorities and the minorities should be able to live free from fear. On the other hand, we cannot allow a minority to place their veto on the advance of the majority.' (Mr Jinnah's rejoinder to these words was that the Muslims of India were not a 'minority' but a 'nation'.) Nine days after the announcement the Cabinet Mission consisting of Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps, and A. V. Alexander arrived in New Delhi. With the Mission was Major Short, who had earned the reputation of being a friend and adviser of the Sikhs.

The Cabinet Mission first interviewed Indian leaders and elicited their views on the sort of constitution they desired for India: the main purport was to ascertain their reactions to the Muslim demand for Pakistan.[3] The Sikhs[4] were represented by

3 The Muslim League held a convention from the 7–9 April 1946 in Delhi, where speeches were made warning the people of what was in store for them if Pakistan was not conceded. The most outspoken orator was Sir Feroze Khan Noon. He said 'Neither the Hindus nor the British know yet how far we are prepared to go in order to achieve[1] Pakistan. We are on the threshold of a great tragedy... if the British force on us an *akhaṅḍ* (united) government, the destruction and havoc which Muslims will cause will put to shame the deeds of Halaku Khan and Chengiz Khan and the responsibility for this will be Britain's.' Ashraf, *Cabinet Mission and After*, pp. 32–4. Gyani Kartar Singh attended the convention as an observer.

4 The Central Akali Dal (Baba Kharak Singh's group) presented a

Master Tara Singh, Gyani Kartar Singh, Harnam Singh (a lawyer from Lahore), and later by Baldev Singh, then development minister in the Punjab government.

The Sikh delegation was united in its opposition to Pakistan. The delegates marshalled all the arguments they could to impress the Cabinet Mission of the utter impossibility of the Sikhs either living in a Muslim state or having territory inhabited by them handed over to the Muslims. The Sikh spokesman, Master Tara Singh, said that he was for a united India; but if Pakistan was conceded, he was for a separate Sikh state with the right to federate either with India or Pakistan. Gyani Kartar Singh elaborated the latter alternative as a 'province of their [Sikhs'] own where they would be in a dominant, or almost dominant position'; this province would comprise the whole of Jullundur and Lahore divisions, together with Hissar, Karnal, and Simla districts of the Ambala division, and the districts of Montgomery and Lyallpur. Baldev Singh defined the Sikh state, Khalistan, in somewhat the same terms, as consisting of 'the Punjab excluding Multan and Rawalpindi divisions, with an approximate boundary along the Chenab, an area comprising the Ambala division, the Jullundur division and the Lahore division,'[5]

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separate memorandum on behalf of their party. It drew attention to the faulty compilation of census figures which made the Muslims a majority community in the Punjab. It opposed the partition of the Punjab and reiterated the demands that had been made by the Chief Khalsa Diwan many times since the introduction of democratic institutions, viz. 33 per cent representation in the Punjab, 5 per cent in the centre, one Sikh member in the central cabinet. In addition, it demanded an 8 per cent representation in the Constituent Assembly (as recommended by the Sapru Committee); a permanent 14 per cent Sikh quota in the defence services; Sikh representation in UP, Sindh, Bihar, Bengal, and Bombay, and an increase in Sikh representation in the North West Frontier Province. The Central Akali Dal supported joint electorates with reservation of seats for minorities and the setting up of special tribunals for the protection of minorities. *Memorandum of the Central Akali Dal* presented to the British Cabinet Mission, April 1946 by Amar Singh, working president.

5 V. P. Menon, *Transfer of Power in India*, p. 242. On 22 March 1946, the Shiromani Akali Dal passed a resolution stating 'Sikhistan' to be its

The way the Sikh spokesmen worded their demand for a Sikh state—not as something inherently desirable, but simply as a point in an argument against Pakistan—robbed the suggestion of any chance of serious consideration. As a result, the Cabinet Mission took no notice of Sikhistan, Azad Punjab, or Khalistan and treated the idea, as well as the Sikhs' exaggerated claim to weightage, as something that had been put up (by the Indian National Congress) to thwart Muslim aspirations.

After discussions with Indian leaders, the Cabinet Mission presented a tentative scheme for discussion at a conference at Simla in an effort to find a basis of agreement between the Congress and the League. The scheme envisaged a central government controlling defence, foreign affairs, and communications, and two sets of provinces—one consisting of predominantly Muslim, the other of predominantly non-Muslim areas—competent to deal with subjects not dealt with by the centre. The princely states were to negotiate with the centre. As the gulf between the two parties proved too wide to be bridged by discussion, the Cabinet Mission issued a statement on 16 May setting forth proposals based on the widest area of agreement between the two main parties and which, they hoped, would constitute a basis on which Indians themselves might decide the future constitution of India. This took some account of the Sikh opposition to forcible inclusion in Pakistan.[6] It envisaged a three-

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political objective. It said: 'Whereas the Sikhs being attached to the Punjab by intimate bonds of holy shrines, property, language, traditions and history claim it as their homeland and holy land which the British took as a trust from the last Sikh ruler during his minority and whereas the entity of the Sikhs is being threatened on account of the persistent demand of Pakistan by the Muslims on the one hand and of danger of absorption by the Hindus on the other, the executive committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal demands the preservation and protection of the religious, cultural and economic and political rights of the Sikh population and their important sacred shrines and historical gurdwaras with provision for the transfer and exchange of population and property.' *Tribune*, 23 March 1946.

6 'Nor can we see any justification,' the statement said, 'for including within a sovereign Pakistan those districts of the Punjab and of Bengal and

tiered constitution consisting of a union (empowered to deal with foreign affairs, defence and communications), of groups of provinces dealing with such subjects as may be delegated to them, and of individual provinces vested with residuary powers. The provinces could, if they desired after ten years, demand reconsideration of the constitution.

The 16 May proposals further provided for a Constituent Assembly elected by members of the provincial legislatures to draft a constitution along the lines envisaged. After a formal plenary session, the Constituent Assembly was to break up into three sections—section A consisting of representatives of non-Muslim majority provinces; section B of representatives from the Punjab, the North West Frontier Province, and Sindh; and section C of representatives from Bengal and Assam.

The Cabinet Mission suggested that, while the constitution was being drafted, the business of administration should be completely transferred to Indian hands.

The new proposals were cautiously received by the Congress as well as the Muslim League. Jinnah accepted them in the hope that they would ultimately result in the establishment of an independent Muslim state. The Sikhs, however, rejected the proposals outright[7] and refused to be persuaded that with

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Assam in which the population is predominantly non-Muslim. Every argument that can be used in favour of Pakistan can equally, in our view, be used in favour of the exclusion of the non-Muslim areas from Pakistan. This point would particularly affect the position of the Sikhs.... We ourselves are also convinced that any solution which involves a radical partition of the Punjab and Bengal, as this would do, would be contrary to the wishes and interests of a very large proportion of the inhabitants of these provinces.... Moreover, any division of the Punjab would of necessity divide the Sikhs, leaving substantial bodies of Sikhs on both sides of the boundary.' V. P. Menon, *Transfer of Power in India*, p. 468.

7 Mahatma Gandhi, who had earlier lauded the scheme now supported the Sikhs. He wrote in his *Harijan*; 'Are the Sikhs for whom the Punjab is the only home in India, to consider themselves, against their will, as a part of the section which takes in Sind, Baluchistan and the Frontier Province?'

dexterous manoeuvring they could hold the balance of power in the Punjab.[8]

On 10 June a joint meeting of Sikh political parties was held in Amritsar. A 'Council of Action' was set up with Narinjan Singh Gill as 'dictator'[9] to direct Sikh opposition to the Cabinet proposals. When the viceroy announced the personnel of the interim government—his fourteen-man executive council—the Sikh nominee, Baldev Singh, was prevailed upon to turn down the invitation. Baldev Singh addressed Prime Minister Attlee on the injustice done to the Sikhs. Mr Attlee replied that the scheme could not be altered to suit the Sikhs[10] and that they should

8 Sikh reactions to these proposals were voiced at a mass meeting held in Lahore (26 May), where Britain was accused of betraying the Sikhs and presenting proposals 'designed to strengthen the hands of the British so that their hold may continue to last in India.' There was talk of launching a morcā.

Master Tara Singh wrote to the secretary of state for India of the 'wave of dejection, resentment and indignation' that had run throughout the Sikh community on account of the proposals. He continued: 'If the first consideration of the Cabinet Mission's recommendations is to give protection to Muslims, why should the same consideration be not shown for Sikhs?' (Tara Singh to secretary of state, 25 May 1946.)

The secretary of state replied that 'the anxieties of the Sikhs were kept prominently in mind when we were drafting the Cabinet Mission's statement and I can certainly claim that of the various alternatives open to us the best one from the Sikh point of view was chosen.

'You will, I am sure, admit that if India had been divided into two sovereign states or if the Punjab had been partitioned, either of these decisions would have been far less acceptable to the Sikhs than the one which was actually reached.' (Secretary of state to Tara Singh, 1 June 1946.) From Master Tara Singh's personal files.

9 Other members of the Council of Action included Master Tara Singh, Baldev Singh, Basant Singh Moga, Ujjal Singh, Inder Singh, Darshan Singh Pheruman, Ajit Singh, Pritam Singh Gojran, Ishar Singh Majhail, Bhai Jodh Singh, Sarmukh Singh Chamak, Nidhan Singh Alam (Namdhari) Gyani Kartar Singh, and Bawa Harkishan Singh.

10 On 18 July 1946, Sir Stafford Cripps made a lengthy statement in the British Parliament on the Cabinet Mission's work in India. Regarding the Sikhs he said: 'It was a matter of great distress to us that the Sikhs should feel they had not received the treatment which they deserved as an important section. The difficulty arises, not from anyone's underestimation of the

safeguard their interests by electing representatives to the Constituent Assembly and collaborating in the drafting of the constitution.

The Congress party's willingness to work out the Cabinet Mission's proposals was more apparent than real. Despite ratification by its working committee, Nehru, who had become president, admitted that, although the Congress had agreed to the scheme of 16 May, it was not likely to accept the grouping of provinces. He was more anxious to get on with the drafting of a new constitution but was not prepared to join the interim government on the basis suggested. Jinnah construed this as a rejection of the 16 May plan. He offered to form an interim government and, on the viceroy's unwillingness to invite him to do so, had the Muslim League reject the 16 May plan *in toto*. The Muslim League called upon its members to express their resentment against the British government by renouncing their titles and drew up a plan for 'direct action.'[11] Direct action (dealt with in the next chapter) resulted in the outbreak of violence in different parts of the country.

Reluctantly, the viceroy invited the Congress party to form a government in the hope that it would win over the League. The Congress failed to win over Jinnah but succeeded in persuading the Sikhs to give up their opposition.[12] On 2 September 1946,

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importance of the Sikh community, but from the inescapable geographical facts of the situation. What the Sikhs demand is some special treatment analogous to that given to the Muslims. The Sikhs, however, are a much smaller community, 5,500,000 against 90,000,000, and are not geographically situated so that any area as yet desired...can be carved out in which they would find themselves in a majority.' *Statesman*, 19 July 1946.

11 Jinnah indicated what he meant by 'direct action'. He said: '...This day we bid goodbye to constitutional methods.... Today we have also forged a pistol and are in a position to use it.' 16 August 1946, was to be celebrated as 'direct action day'.

12 A meeting of the Panthic Board on 14 August 1946, decided to respond to the appeal of the Congress party to accept the statement of 16 May. It did so but without giving up its strong reservations against the Mission's proposals. The Board advised Sikh members of the Punjab Assembly to elect representatives to the Constituent Assembly.

Mr Nehru's cabinet was sworn in. Baldev Singh took over the defence portfolio.

A few weeks later, when Hindu-Muslim riots flared up, the League decided to join the government. It was reconstituted on 26 October 1946. The viceroy redoubled his efforts to re-establish peace and enlarge the area of agreement between the major political parties. Leaders of the Congress, the League, and Baldev Singh were invited to London. The main object of this meeting was to obtain the co-operation of all parties in the Constituent Assembly, the League having indicated its unwillingness to participate. The issue in dispute was the interpretation of the clauses dealing with the grouping of provinces. The Congress felt unable to accept the Cabinet Mission's interpretation, which had been accepted by the Muslim League. A statement was therefore issued by the British government at the conclusion of the discussions stating that these clauses were an essential part of the scheme and expressing the hope that, should the Muslim League see its way to participate in the Constituent Assembly, it would agree, as had the Congress, to refer matters of interpretation to the Federal Court. When the Constituent Assembly met three days later it was without members of the League. These events increased the nervousness of minorities in the 'Pakistan group' of provinces, and they began to organize themselves in Assam, Bengal, and the Punjab. The Sikhs asked for safeguards in the Punjab similar to those extended to Muslims in the Constituent Assembly, and they resolved to demand anew the partition of their province.[13]

13 Four Sikhs elected to the Constituent Assembly, who at first had decided to keep away from its deliberations, agreed to take their seats after assurances from Congress leaders. On 17 January 1947, Gyani Kartar Singh and Ujjal Singh explained to pressmen that the right of veto which they were seeking would mean that 'nothing affecting the Sikhs should be decided upon without the consent of the Sikhs themselves.' Five days later, Gyani Kartar Singh, Ujjal Singh, and Harnam Singh met Lord Wavell and asked for the right to veto legislation affecting them in Section B of the proposed groups of provinces (*Tribune*, 23 January 1947). On 5 January 1947, the Congress, at its session in Delhi, repeated the assurance of its support to minorities, particularly the Sikhs.

Meanwhile the Congress Working Committee had passed a resolution on 5 January 1947, agreeing to advise action in accordance with the British government's interpretation of the disputed clauses. The qualifying clauses of the remainder of the resolution led the Muslim League to conclude that Congress had no intention of implementing their so-called agreement. The Muslim League accused Congress of making the Constituent Assembly a 'rump' parliament and demanded its dissolution. The Congress, in view of the League's non-participation in the Constituent Assembly, demanded the resignation of the members of the Muslim League from the interim government. Lord Wavell warned the Indian leaders that civil strife had assumed such proportions that neither the police nor the army could be relied on to act impartially.

In view of the impasse which had been reached, on 20 February 1947, Attlee announced in Parliament that the British government would relinquish power in India by June 1948 at the latest; Lord Mountbatten would replace Lord Wavell as viceroy and arrange the transfer of power. Attlee hoped that the sense of urgency would engender responsibility and compel the rival parties to come to an understanding.

While the political *pourparlers* were going on, inter-communal violence in India assumed the proportions of a civil war. We must retrace our steps to see how this came to pass.

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17. Civil Strife, Exodus, and Resettlement

The Prelude

In a poor and overpopulated country such as India, whose peoples are sharply divided by faith, cultures, and ways of living, tensions between groups are to be expected. In the north, from the days of the earliest Islamic invasion, communal tensions developed between invaders and their supporters on the one side and indigenous inhabitants on the other. Some enlightened rulers tried to minimize the differences, and a few, such as Ranjit Singh, temporarily succeeded. But most either imposed domination of their own creed, or, like the British, dexterously exploited differences to their own advantage. If the festival of Bakr Id, when Muslims chose to sacrifice cows instead of lambs or goats, passed without violent protest from cow-venerating Hindus or Sikhs, it was fortunate. And seldom did a noisy procession of Hindus or Sikhs deliberately routed to pass along mosques fail in its object of irritating Muslims and being pelted with brick-bats.

The 1920s and 1930s were particularly bad decades of communal bitterness in the Punjab. The Arya Samaj Śudhī (conversion) movement was matched by the *tanzīm* of the Muslims. Sikh-Muslim relations were embittered by dispute over Shahidganj claimed by the Muslims to be a mosque and by the

Sikhs to be a gurdwara. Sikhs won their case and demolished remnants of the old mosque causing much heartbreak to the Muslims. Sikh insistence on wearing long kirpans further irritated the Muslims. These decades also witnessed the increase of communal militias, the Hindu RSSS, the Muslim Khaksars and the Sikh Dal.

Communal violence was, understandably, more an urban than a rural phenomenon. Villages were predominantly one community or the other, the open countryside less corrosive than the cheek-by-jowl living of congested bazaars. Despite the tradition of distrust, village communities were able to coexist in peace and even to assume a facade of amity, often simulating kinship. But even the villagers' suspicions of each other's motives and intentions were never completely eradicated. In the clasp of a fraternal embrace often lurked the fear of the dagger. It was this kind of mentality which compelled Jinnah to posit his theory that Indians were not one nation but two: Muslims and non-Muslims. And it was this kind of thinking which came to obsess the minds of Indians in the 1940s.

The communal riots of 1946–7 were in every way different from those that had taken place earlier. Up till then the riots had been minor affairs: an exchange of lathi-blows, a stab in the back, or a bottle of acid hurled from a balcony. Seldom, if ever, were firearms used. People were hurt, occasionally someone succumbed to his injuries. Women were rarely molested; the aged and the children were always spared. The fracas (a stronger word would be too violent) were always followed by periods of contrition when solemn vows were taken never to hurt each other again.

By contrast, what took place in 1946 and 1947 can only be described as a general massacre. No one was exempted on grounds of age or sex. In the past rioting had been the monopoly of the *guṅdā* (thug). The killings of 1946–7 were masterminded by politicians and executed by gangs drawn from all sections of society, armed with modern weapons such as sten-guns and hand-grenades. The explanation was invariably the same. The antagonists accused each other of starting the riot

and exonerated themselves by pleading that they had acted only in retaliation.[1]

The Sikhs were in a peculiar position in the Hindu-Muslim conflict. They professed a neutral creed but were a part of the Hindu social system. They were much the most prosperous section of the Punjab peasantry and, having been nurtured in a martial tradition, more ebullient than their numbers (13 per cent in the Punjab) would warrant. The Sikhs often tried to play the role of peacemakers, but since their sympathies were manifestly Hindu, as the rioting increased in intensity, the Muslims quite rightly began to look upon them as an aggressively anti-Muslim element. In any case the Muslims felt that if Pakistan was to bring prosperity to their people, Sikhs who owned the best wheatlands of the Punjab would have to be dispossessed. Chaudhri Rahmat Ali, who first conceived Pakistan, stated this categorically:

'Avoid minorityism, which means that we must not leave our minorities in Hindu lands, even if the British and the Hindus offer them the so-called constitutional safeguards. For no safeguards can be substituted for the nationhood which is their birthright. Nor must we keep Hindu and/or Sikh minorities in our lands, even if they themselves were willing to remain with or without any special safeguards. For they will never be of us. Indeed, while in ordinary times they will retard our national

1 The future historian sifting the documents on the partition riots will be faced with a mass of contradictory statements. The only course is to peruse both the Hindu-Sikh and the Muslim literature on the subject and then consider 'neutral' English opinion. For the Hindu-Sikh point of view, see G. D. Khosla's *Stern Reckoning* (which is also the Government of India's version of the riots) and *Muslim League Attack on Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab 1947* published by the S.G.P.C. For the Muslim-Pakistani version, see *Intelligence Reports Concerning the Tribal Repercussions on the Events in the Punjab, Kashmir and India, Note on the Sikh Plan, The Sikhs in Action* and *The R.S.S.S.* For neutral opinion see Campbell Johnson's *Mission with Mountbatten,* Penderel Moon's *Divide and Quit,* Leonard Mosley's *The Last Days of the British Raj,* General Sir W. Francis Tuker's *While Memory Serves,* and Ian Stephens' *Pakistan.*

reconstruction, in times of crisis they will betray us and bring about our redestruction.'[2]

It is not surprising that the Sikh attitude to Pakistan was one of uncompromising hostility. Since the vast majority of Muslims wanted Pakistan, Sikh opposition to the state was construed as animosity towards Muslims.

'Direct Action Day' and its Sequel

The first shot in the series of riots was fired on the 'direct action day' organized by the Muslim League in Calcutta on 16 August 1946. The chief minister of Bengal, Suhrawardy, had declared it a public holiday, and a meeting of the Muslim League took place in the afternoon. Muslim crowds returning home clashed with the Hindus. For four or five days the ensuing violence brought life in the metropolis to a standstill. The official estimate of casualties in these few days was 5000 killed, 15,000 injured, and 100,000 rendered homeless.[3] The riots continued intermittently for many months.

2 Rahmat Ali, *The Millat and its Mission; Muslim League Attack on Sikhs and Hindus*, p. 8.

The Muslim League made no attempt to reassure the Sikhs nor tried to win them over in support of Pakistan. On the contrary, Jinnah himself made it quite clear that Pakistan was to be a purely Muslim state. In a speech delivered in London in October 1946 in which he explained his claim for partition he said: 'What would Hindus lose? Look at the map. They would have the best parts. They have a population of nearly 200,000,000. Pakistan is certainly not the best part of India. *We should have a population of 100,000,000 all Muslims.' Muslim League Attack* on *Sikhs and Hindus*, p. 13.

3 The British-owned *Statesman* of Calcutta put the blame for (the Calcutta killings squarely on the Muslim League. 'Where the primary blame lies is where we have squarely put it—upon the provincial Muslim League Cabinet which carries the responsibility for law and order in Bengal, and particularly upon the one able man of large administrative experience, the chief minister, Suhrawardy.' (This opinion was not as categorically repeated by the editor, Ian Stephens in his book *Pakistan* published in 1963, chapter VIII.) The view is shared by other English writers: Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit*, p. 58; Leonard Mosley, *The Last Days of*

In 1946 there were no more than 10–20,000 Sikhs in Calcutta—the majority of them taxi drivers or small businessmen. Although the Muslims regarded them as a militant wing of the Hindus and, as such, marked them out for destruction (many were killed in the first few days), the Sikhs of Calcutta succeeded in winning the confidence of both Hindus and Muslims; they rescued the beleaguered of both communities and offered them asylum in their gurdwaras. Chief minister Suhrawardy issued a statement to the press completely exonerating the Sikhs of Calcutta of the charge of being anti-Muslim and complimenting them on the part they had played in rescuing Muslims.[4]

The killings of Calcutta were a signal for riots to break out in other parts of India, notably Bombay and Ahmedabad. The Muslim League now realized the hazards of allowing power to remain exclusively in the hands of the Congress and agreed to join the government. On 15 October 1946, the central cabinet was reconstituted with four Muslim Leaguers and one scheduled caste nominee of the League. This did not abate the violence; on the contrary, rioting broke out in east Bengal. The two districts chiefly affected, Noakhali and Tipperah, were predominantly

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the British Raj, p. 33; and even General Sir Francis Tuker, whose *While Memory Serves* is notoriously anti-Indian (p. 158).

The Muslim League paper, *Dawn*, castigated the *Statesman*'s 'diabolically planned one-sided propaganda' and maintained that the Hindus launched a well-planned attack on peaceful Muslims. According to *Dawn*, the casualties in the first week's killings were four Muslims to one Hindu. Liaqat Ali Khan, general secretary of the Muslim League (and later prime minister of Pakistan) issued a statement to the press on August 18 saying 'The Hindu elements whose activities plunged Calcutta into the orgies of violence did so to discredit the Muslim League ministry.' He said that hospital records of admissions on the evening of 16 August showed that an overwhelming majority of the wounded and dead were Muslims. Jinnah also stated, 'We were attacked by the Congress followers because they wanted to stamp out our propaganda and discredit our cause by creating disturbance and then throwing the blame on us.' M. Ashraf, *Cabinet Mission and After*, p. 410.

4 See Appendix 5.

Muslim (81.35 per cent and 77.09 per cent); the victims were mainly Hindus. The news of the killing of Hindus triggered off rioting in distant cities; then it exploded with unprecedented fury in Bihar, where the Hindus vastly outnumbered the Muslims. Loss of Muslim life in Bihar was estimated at over 10,000. Equally fierce was a pogrom in Garhmukhteshwar, where several hundred Muslim peasants were massacred in a day.

Few Sikhs were involved in the riots in Calcutta, east Bengal, Bihar, UP, or central India. The first time the Sikhs were drawn into the vortex of violence was in the winter of 1946–7 in Hazara (North West Frontier Province), where Muslims formed 95 per cent of the population. Muslims who had been inflamed by the slaughter of their co-religionists in Bihar wreaked their vengeance on the Sikhs. Sikhs of the North West Frontier Province (as well as of the districts of Rawalpindi, Cambellpur and Multan, where the riots spread later) were pusillanimous Khatri and Arora shopkeepers with no pretensions to the militancy which distinguished their Jat co-religionists. In December 1946 a large number of Sikh villages in the Hazara district were destroyed. Sikh refugees began to pour into central and eastern Punjab carrying with them evidence of murder, rape, abduction and forcible conversion.

Prime Minister Attlee made personal appeals to Nehru and Jinnah to co-operate in restoring peace, to facilitate the setting up of the Constituent Assembly and a smooth transfer of power. Indian leaders, in their turn, appealed to the people to abstain from violence. The appeals fell on deaf ears. On the contrary, the announcement that Britain would soon relinquish power added fuel to the flames and rioting was resumed with greater frenzy.

Civil Strife in the Punjab

Till 1946 Khizr Hayat Khan (expelled from the Muslim League in June 1944) had been able to walk the razor's edge with a slender majority comprising Unionist Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs of other parties. But the Punjab government fought a losing battle against the mounting tide of communal passions and on

24 January 1947, passed an order banning private armies, including the Hindu RSSS and the Akali Dal, as well as the Muslim League's National Guards. The League seized the opportunity and organized a massive defiance of the order. After a few days the order was withdrawn and the Muslim leaders who had been seized for their defiance were released. It was an ignominious retreat ending in abject surrender. On 2 March 1946, Khizr Hayat Khan submitted his government's resignation. There were scenes of great excitement outside the Punjab Legislative Assembly building in Lahore. Master Tara Singh (not a member of the Assembly) unsheathed his kirpan before the assembled crowd and shouted, 'Death to Pakistan'. Two days later, a procession of Sikh and Hindu students parading the streets of Lahore clashed with a Muslim mob. News of the outbreak in the capital was a signal for rioting in Amritsar, Rawalpindi, Gujarat, Multan, and Cambellpur.

The largest number of victims of the March riots were Sikhs. The murderous game of stealthily creeping up, quickly stabbing the victim, and running away could best be played against the easily identifiable Sikh rather than the Hindu or the Muslim, who, unless attired in his special dress, had to be stripped naked to see whether or not he was circumcised before his fate could be decided. The Sikhs took a terrible beating.[5] The March riots

5 One of the worst cases of destruction was the Sikh village Kahuta in Rawalpindi district. Lord Mountbatten visited it with his party in April. His press officer records: 'Picking our way through the rubble, we could see that the devastation was as thorough as any produced by fire-bomb raids in the war. This particular communal orgy involved the destruction of Sikhs and their livelihood by Moslems who were proving difficult to track down. The Moslems in the area seemed to be quite pleased with themselves.' Campbell Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, p. 79.

On 6 March 1947, a deputation led by Ujjal Singh waited on the governor. Sir Evan Jenkins, and asked for the posting of military personnel in towns and cities for the protection of urbanite Hindus and Sikhs. *Tribune*, 7 March 1947.

On 12 April 1947, Bhim Sen Sachar and Swaran Singh asked for a division of the Punjab with two separate ministries—one for Muslim and the other for non-Muslim zones. *Tribune*, 13 April 1947.

proved that their so-called armies—the Akali Dal, Akal Fauj, or Akal Sena—were paper organizations and their leaders paper tigers.

The communal bent of the police was an important factor in the killings. Over 74 per cent of the Punjab force was Muslim.[6] In addition to the regulars, there were 6000 men in the additional police force which had been raised in the early years of the war by Sikandar Hayat Khan. The additional police was armed, overwhelmingly Muslim, and suspected by non-Muslims as the nucleus of the army for Pakistan.

The riots were a rude awakening to the Sikhs. The fear that their name had at one time aroused had evaporated; their talk of martial prowess was dismissed as the bombast of a decadent race. Humiliation steeled the hearts of the Sikhs against the Muslims; their mood was not one of compromise but of settling scores. The chief secretary's report described the Sikhs without 'a vestige of a wish to settle the communal problem without partition' and as 'organizing for strife'. The report continued:

'Their plans embrace the whole community in the Punjab and it is said that they also involve the Sikh states. The Sikhs are being regimented, they are being armed, if they are not armed already and they are being inflamed by propaganda both oral and written. With deliberate purpose their hatred is being increased by the stories related to them by their co-religionists who have suffered at Muslim hands. The important question about the Sikhs is not if and when they intend to fight; it is whether if the Sikh leaders continue as they are doing, they will be able to hold their following in check and maintain their discipline.'[7]

On Baisakhi day (13 April 1947) Master Tara Singh and 280 jathedārs vowed at the Akal Takht to sacrifice their lives for the community. From then onwards, the Sikhs began to reorganize their defunct jathās in towns and villages, to arm them with

6 The total police force in the Punjab was 24,095, of which 17,848 were Muslims, 6167 Hindus and Sikhs, and 80 Europeans or Anglo-Indians.

7 *Note on the Sikh Plan*, pp. 7–8.

swords and, if possible, guns.[8] The number of Nihangs increased suddenly. Contacts were made with the RSSS and Sikh princely states; members of the INA were recruited to guard the Golden Temple and other historic gurdwaras. A drive was made to collect Rs 50 lacs for a defence fund.[9]

On 22 March 1947, Lord Mountbatten took over as viceroy from Lord Wavell. His brief was to arrange the transfer of power from British to Indian hands as expeditiously as possible. He started by meeting leaders of the different parties and ascertaining their views on the alternatives—united India or Pakistan. He consulted the governors of the provinces. Sir Evan Jenkins warned him that division of the Punjab on communal lines would be disastrous because in every district the Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs were inextricably mixed.

Public opinion in the country was, however, in favour of division. Sikh and Punjabi Hindu members of the Central Legislature, the Punjab Assembly, and the Constituent Assembly met in Delhi and passed a resolution demanding a 'just and equitable' division of the province on the basis of numbers and property. Akalis and Communists (who supported Pakistan) put forward the claim to a Sikh state, Khalistan.

Lord Mountbatten returned to England to apprise his government of the Indian situation and to renew his brief. The British

8 The chief figures in this 'Sikh Conspiracy,' as it has often been described, were Master Tara Singh, Gyani Kartar Singh (who took over as president of the Akali Dal on 16 April), Udham Singh Nagoke, Ishar Singh Majhail, Jathedar Mohan Singh, Sohan Singh Jalal Usman, Sarmukh Singh Chamak, Amar Singh Dosanjh, 'General' Mohan Singh, and Colonel N. S. Gill. In the initial stages Sikh bands were organized by Gyani Harbans Singh of Anandpur, who had been absconding on a charge of murder. (The Gyani was later apprehended and hanged.)

The INA Sikhs set up their headquarters at Majitha House (the residence of Surjit Singh Majithia) in Amritsar. Surjit Singh, son of Sunder Singh Majithia was later Indian ambassador to Nepal and then a member of Parliament (Congress) and deputy minister of defence.

9 The Akalis did in fact raise 10–12 lacs. Baldev Singh was confronted by Lord Mountbatten in the presence of the Punjab governor and asked whether he was treasurer of the Sikh defence fund. He denied all knowledge of it. Campbell Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, p. 66.

government agreed that if the Indians so desired, they should divide India. For the Punjab and Bengal, the procedure recommended was that their respective legislatures be divided into two groups: one representing Muslim majority districts, and the other the rest of the province. Each group would vote for or against partition. If any one group voted for partition, a commission would be appointed to draw the line of demarcation.

Lord Mountbatten came back to India and placed the plan for voting on partition before the Indian leaders. In an introductory speech, he made special reference to the position of the Sikhs, whose future (according to Mountbatten) had been of the greatest concern to the members of the British Parliament.[10] The viceroy affirmed that he had questioned Sikh leaders many times whether they really wanted a partition of the Punjab which would inevitably split their population into two and had been assured by every one of them that he would rather have the Punjab divided than live in Pakistan.

The Congress and the Muslim League agreed to the proposals in principle. Baldev Singh's views had already been ascertained. All he had to add at this stage was that the Sikh position should be borne in mind in drafting the terms of reference of the Boundary Commission.[11]

10 The plight of the Sikhs aroused the sympathy of many British parliamentarians. On 15 July, R. A. Butler said in the House of Commons: 'The British had the happiest possible relations with the Sikh community and, of all the martial races of the world, the Sikhs probably had built up the greatest reputation. The only situation which could mitigate the plight of the Sikhs was that the Boundary Commission should so define the boundary that the maximum portion of the Sikhs should be included within one conglomerate whole.' *Tribune*, 16 July 1947.

11 Sikh leaders were in constant consultation with each other. The Akali Dal Working Committee met in Delhi on 2 June 1947. The meeting was attended by Gyani Kartar Singh (president), Master Tara Singh, Amar Singh Dosanjh, Pritam Singh Gojran, Mangal Singh Gill, Swaran Singh, Ujjal Singh, and Baldev Singh. Baldev Singh reported on his talks. The leaders resolved to press for a partition of the Punjab but to maintain the integrity of the community by demanding that the boundary be drawn at the Chenab. (*Hindustan Times*, 3 June 1947.) Similar meetings were convened at Lahore.

In his broadcast on the night of 3 June, the viceroy again spoke feelingly of the fate that awaited the Sikhs.

'We have given careful consideration to the position of the Sikhs. This valiant community form about an eighth of the population of the Punjab, but they are so distributed that any partition of this province will inevitably divide them. All of us who have the good of the Sikh community at heart are very sorry to think that the partition of the Punjab, which they themselves desire, cannot avoid splitting them to a greater or lesser extent. The exact degree of the split will be left to the Boundary Commission on which they will of course be represented.'[12]

At a press conference the following day he said:

'There are two main parties to this plan—the Congress and the Muslim League—but another community much less numerous but of great importance—the Sikh community—have of course to be considered. I found that it was mainly at the request of the Sikh community that Congress had put forward the resolution on the partition of the Punjab, and you will remember that in the words of that resolution they wished the Punjab to be divided between predominantly Muslim and non-Muslim areas. It was therefore on that resolution, which the Sikhs themselves sponsored, that this division has been provided for. I was not aware of all the details when this suggestion was made but when I sent for the map and studied the distribution of the Sikh population under this proposal, I must say that I was astounded to find that the plan which they had produced divided their community into two almost equal parts. I have spent a great deal of time both out here and in England in seeing whether there was any solution which would keep the Sikh community more together without departing from the broad and easily understood principle, the principle which was demanded on the one side and was conceded on the other. I am not a miracle worker and I have not found that solution.'[13]

12 Lord Mountbatten's broadcast at All India Radio, 3 June 1947.

13 It cannot be too often repeated that the Sikhs chose the lesser of two evils—partition or Muslim domination.

Lord Mountbatten was asked whether in drawing the boundaries of provinces to be partitioned the basic factor would be religion or whether other considerations such as property and economic viability, would be included in the terms of reference. Mountbatten replied that it could hardly be expected that a Labour government would subscribe to partition on the principle of property.[14]

Any notion that the Sikh leaders might have had of pressing their case in terms of the land they owned or the revenue they paid should have been dispelled by this statement. But they persisted in holding to their cherished illusions. A few days later an All Parties Sikh Conference met in Lahore and passed a resolution that the Sikhs would not accept a boundary which did not preserve the solidarity and integrity of the community.[15]

The procedure for partitioning the Punjab (and Bengal) was put into effect straightaway. The Punjab Legislative Assembly was convened, and in the series of votings all Muslim members voted against while all Sikhs and Hindus voted for partition of the province.[16]

14 Campbell Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, p. 109.

15 The Sikh reaction to the plan and their temper can be gauged from the chief secretary's report: 'The partition plan envisaged divides their [the Sikhs] strength and leaves them in a minority in both areas.... They have therefore, been driven back on reiterating their demands and perfecting the organization of their forces. Their endeavour in both directions is positive in character. The Sikhs are pinning their hopes upon the Boundary Commission and the Congress, but their latest circular issued by the Shiromani Akali Dal shows that the confidence in the strength of the *Panth* has neither been undermined nor surrendered. The circular states that Pakistan means total death to the Sikh *Panth* and that the Sikhs are determined on a free sovereign state with the Chenab and the Jumna as its borders, and it calls on all Sikhs to fight for their ideal under the flag of the Dal.' *Note on the Sikh Plan*, p. 25.

16 In the plenary meeting, 91 votes were cast for and 77 against joining a new Constituent Assembly. Then members from the Muslim majority areas of west Punjab voted by 69 to 27 against the partition of the province. And finally members from the non-Muslim districts of east Punjab voted in favour of partition by 50 for and 22 against.

Boundary Commissions were appointed with Sir Cyril Radcliffe as chairman. Each commission included four judges, two Muslims and two others. The Sikh member of the Punjab Commission was Teja Singh, a judge of the Punjab High Court. The terms of reference of the commissions were to demarcate contiguous Muslim majority areas and in so doing to take into account 'other factors'.

The Sikhs built their hopes of salvaging their shrines, homes, and lands in western Punjab on the commission taking into account 'other factors' besides the incidence of population. A memorandum signed by 32 Sikh members of the legislature was presented to the Punjab Boundary Commission. It drew attention to the inaccuracy of the census reports; the floating character of a sizeable section of the Muslim population (that is, nomadic tribes); the colonization and ownership of the richest lands in western Punjab by the Sikhs; the location of some of their important historical shrines. The memorandum demanded that the dividing line be drawn along the Chenab River which would, with some modifications, keep over 90 per cent of the Sikhs in a compact unit in eastern Punjab.[17]

Representations on behalf of the Muslims claimed not only the Lahore, Multan, and Rawalpindi divisions but also a number of tehsils in the Jullundur and Ambala divisions.

The points of view of the Muslim and the non-Muslim judges on the location of the line of partition were completely at variance; the decision was in fact solely that of Sir Cyril Radcliffe. To east Punjab he gave 13 districts, viz. the districts of Ambala and Jullundur divisions, the district of Amritsar and some tehsils of Lahore and Gurdaspur. He also gave the upper reaches of the Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi to east Punjab. The rest, comprising of 62 per cent of the total area of the province and 55 per cent of the population, was given to Pakistan.

The Radcliffe award was as fair as it could be to the Muslims and the Hindus. The one community to which no boundary award

17 *The Sikh Memorandum to the Boundary Commission*, July 1947. The Indian National Congress presented a separate memorandum to the Punjab Boundary Commission.

could have done justice without doing injustice to others were the Sikhs. Their richest lands, over 150 historical shrines, and half of their population were left on the Pakistan side of the dividing line.

While the Boundary Commission was holding its deliberations, law and order in the Punjab continued to deteriorate. Ever since the flare up in March, militant organizations had been busy recruiting and procuring weapons. While Muslims[18] got arms from the tribal areas of the North West Frontier Province and

18 The Muslim League had begun to build up a stock of arms for use in riots as early as December 1946. A secret fund (secret *sanḍūq*) was raised and arms procured from the North West Frontier Province. This was proved in the enquiry against the Khan of Mamdot ordered by the Pakistan government in 1949. The following extract from the proceedings of the enquiry amply proves this contention:

Answering questions by defence counsel in the Mamdot Enquiry, Chaudhri Mohammed Hassan, ex-MLA, affirmed that in October 1946 members of the working committee of the Punjab Provincial Muslim League and prominent Muslim League leaders met in a secret meeting at Mamdot Villa. Among those who attended were the Khan of Mamdot, Mian Abdul Bari, and the witness.

'The meeting was held at a time when communal riots in Calcutta and Bombay had not yet completely ended. It was decided at the meeting to raise secret funds to be called 'secret *sanḍūq*' for the purchase of jeeps, trucks, iron jackets, arms and ammunition, and blankets.

'Consequently,' witness continued, 'another secret meeting was called and the Khan of Mamdot directed Rana Nasrullah Khan to arrange for the purchase of one hundred iron jackets through his brother Rana Zafrullah Khan. At the same meeting Begum Shah Nawaz was asked to arrange for the purchase of hand grenades through her daughter, the late Miss Mumtaz Shah Nawaz.

'Replying to further questions, witness deposed it was true that Sardar Rashid Ahmad and Mohammed Akbar Khan, who is the son-in-law of Begum Shah Nawaz, were also directed to purchase arms and ammunition from the Frontier Province and to bring them here for distribution.... The respondent provided the requisite money with which seven thousand steel helmets were purchased directly from military stores.' *Dawn*, 22 October 1949.

The nawab of Mamdot was able to prove that the money had in fact been spent in buying weapons and equipping Muslims with them. He was acquitted of the charge of misuse of funds.

Bahawalpur, Sikhs obtained them from the Sikh states, chiefly Patiala. Kapurthala, and Faridkot. The real build-up of Sikh militarism was the formation of jathās in villages armed with the traditional kirpan and the spear.[19] It became obvious that as soon as the dividing line was drawn, the communities would be at war against each other and there would have to be an exchange of population.[20] A Partition Council was set up to

19 On 14 June 1947, Lord Mountbatten's press attache wrote: 'We are in the heart of Sikh country here, and the prevailing atmosphere is one of tension and foreboding...they [the Sikhs] see that the partition of India means substantially and irrevocably the partition of the Sikhs, and they feel themselves to be sacrificed on the altars of Muslim ambition and Hindu opportunism.... No juggling of the Boundary Commission can prevent their bisection. They react accordingly and their leaders hopelessly outmanoeuvred in the political struggle, begin to invoke more primitive methods...power is passing to the wilder men, such as Master Tara Singh and some of the younger INA officers. Rough weather lies ahead of us....' Campbell Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, p. 118.

20 Sir Evan Jenkins' letter to Lord Mountbatten dated 10 July 1947, regarding his meeting with Gyani Kartar Singh is illuminating. 'The Gyani was extremely frank about the intentions of the Sikhs. What he said confirms my view that they mean to make trouble if the decision based on the Boundary Commission is not to their liking, or if the new governments of Pakistan and India are set up before the decision is given.'

Sir Evan appended another note to the letter saying: 'Gyani Kartar Singh came to see me today.... He said he had come to see me about the Indian Independence Bill and the Boundary Commission.... He said that in the Punjab there would have to be an exchange of populations on a large scale. Were the British ready to enforce this? He doubted if they were, and if no regard was paid to Sikh solidarity a fight was inevitable. The British had said for years that they intended to protect the minorities and what had happened? The present situation was a clear breach of faith by the British.

'I replied that I realized that the Sikhs were dissatisfied, but when independence came to any country some classes, who had formerly regarded themselves as protected, inevitably suffered. At the same time, I thought that the Sikhs had only themselves to blame for their present position. The Gyani himself had insisted on partition and Baldev Singh had accepted the plan.

'Gyani then said neither had viewed partition as being based on population alone. The Sikhs were entitled to their own land just as much

handle the problem. A Boundary Force under Major General Rees assisted by Brigadier Digambar Singh Brar (India) and Colonel Ayub Khan (later president of Pakistan) consisting of two and a half divisions was entrusted with the control of movements of populations in the districts of Sialkot, Lyallpur, Montgomery, Lahore, Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Jullundur, Ferozepur, and Ludhiana.

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as the Hindus or the Muslims. They must have their shrine at Nankana Sahib, at least one canal system, and finally arrangements must be made so as to bring at least three-quarters of the Sikh population from West to East Punjab. Property must be taken into account as well as population in the exchange as the Sikhs on the whole were better off than the Muslims. Gyani said that unless it was recognized by His Majesty's Government, the viceroy and the Party leaders that the fate of the Sikhs was a vital issue, there would be trouble...they would be obliged to fight...that the Sikhs realized that they would be in a bad position, but would have to fight on revolutionary lines by murdering officials, cutting railway lines, destroying canal headworks and so on, 'I reiterated that this would be a very foolish policy, to which Gyani replied that if Britain were invaded, no doubt my feelings would be much the same as his.... The Muslims were now putting out some conciliatory propaganda about their attitude towards the Sikhs in their midst, but their intention was that of a sportsman who is careful not to disturb the birds he means to shoot. He believed the Muslims would try to make the Sikhs of West Punjab feel secure and then set about them in earnest.'

Sir Evan Jenkins ended his dispatch: 'Finally the Gyani appealed to me to do all I could to help the Sikhs during a period of great trial. He said I surely could not wish to abandon the Punjab to tears and bloodshed. There could be tears and bloodshed here if the boundary problem was not suitably solved. The Gyani was matter of fact and quiet throughout our conversation but wept when he made his final appeal. This is the nearest thing to an ultimatum yet given by the Sikhs. They are undoubtedly puzzled and unhappy. I see no reason to suppose that they have lost the nuisance value they have in the past possessed over a century.'

On 13 July Jenkins wrote yet another letter to Mountbatten, reinforcing his warning of the dangers of the situation. 'The communal feeling is now unbelievably bad,' he said. 'The Sikhs believe that they will be expropriated and massacred in West Punjab and smothered by the Hindus and Congress generally in East Punjab. They threaten a violent rising immediately.' Leonard Mosley, *The Last Days of the British Raj*, pp. 205–7.

On 15 August 1947, as India celebrated its independence, nearly ten million Punjabis were at each other's throats. In east Punjab, the Muslim police were disbanded and the Muslims left to the mercy of marauding bands of Sikhs and RSSS militia. Sikh violence attained its peak in September 1947.[21] General Rees of the Boundary Force reported:

'*Jathās* were of various kinds in strength from twenty to thirty men up to five or six hundred or more. When an expedition was of limited scope the *jathās* did not usually increase beyond the numbers which had originally set out; but if the projected operation was to attack a village, a convoy or a train, the local villagers would join and swell the assailants to several thousands. They had recognized leaders, headquarters which constantly shifted about, and messengers who travelled on foot, on horseback and even by motor transport. The usual method of attack, apart from assaults on villages, was from ambush. Information as to the movement of convoys or trains was relatively easy to obtain. As the crops were high, it was simple to ambush marching columns of refugees. The attackers would remain concealed until the last moment and then would pour in a stampeding volley, usually in the northwest frontier fashion, from the opposite side from where the shock assailants lay in wait. In spite of the best efforts of the escorts to hold them together, the refugees would scatter in panic, whereupon the ambush parties would dash in with sword and spear. With attackers and attacked inextricably mixed, the escort was usually unable to protect its charges.'[22]

On both the Indian and Pakistan sides horrible atrocities were committed. Foot-weary convoys of refugees were attacked till the roads were clogged with corpses; trains were attacked and sent across the borders with bogies jammed with slaughtered passengers. No quarter was given to the sick or the aged

21 'Mountbatten asked about Sikh motives. Was the object to set up a Sikh State? V. P. [Menon] replied no. Politically they had lost out, and had not even gained the Jullundur division. Their motive was almost entirely revenge.' 15 September 1917. Campbell Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, p. 191.

22 Lt. Col. G. R. Stevens, *History of the 4th Indian Division.*

or even to infants. Young women were occasionally spared only to be ravished. Never in the history of the world was there a bigger exchange of populations attended with so much bloodshed.[23]

Then the monsoon burst in all its fury: rivers rose; roads were submerged; bridges collapsed; rail tracks were washed away. In refugee camps cholera broke out. The floods wiped the bloodstains off the face of the land.

The Exodus and Resettlement in East Punjab

In the winter of 1946–7 Sikh refugees from the North West Frontier Province had started trekking to the central districts of the Punjab. The second round of violence in March 1947 showed that, even in cities such as Lahore and Amritsar, the Muslim thug could get the better of the Hindu or Sikh hoodlum. The refugees resumed their trek south-eastwards into districts where a preponderance of their coreligionists gave them a sense of security.

In August when rioting assumed the proportion of civil war, people again packed up their belongings and awaited directions from their leaders for the next move. Master Tara Singh and Gyani Kartar Singh (both authors of the partition plan) first exhorted the Sikhs in western Punjab to stay where they were and make their terms with Pakistan. Mahatma Gandhi made similar appeals to the Muslims of eastern Punjab to stay on in India. But the wave of hatred that swept the province compelled the Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan to leave for India and Muslims in eastern Punjab to seek asylum in Pakistan; the two-way traffic assumed

23 There are various estimates of the number of people killed in the Punjab during these riots. Penderel Moon, who claims to have had a 'pretty accurate knowledge of the casualties' in Bahawalpur and adjacent Pakistani districts and who compared notes with Sir Francis Mudie, governor of west Punjab, came to the conclusion that it was 60,000 dead in Pakistan and a little more in east Punjab. He qualified his first computation of a total of 200,000 dead on both sides as 'somewhat inflated'. Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit*, p. 293.

mammoth proportions.[24] A Military Evacuation Organization (MEO) was set up in the first week of September. There were four main routes from Pakistan Punjab to Indian Punjab: Narowal-Dera Baba Nanak, Lahore-Amritsar, Kasur-Ferozepur and Montgomery-Fazilka. The MEO and the Boundary Force tried to minimize collisions between the convoys moving in opposite directions and to fight off gangs which preyed on them. The Indian government organized camps for non-Muslim refugees, the biggest one being at Kurukshetra. In October 1947, the refugee population from west Punjab in Indian camps was well over 720,000.

The new governments were not sure of the exact nature of the problem. Was the migration permanent? Or would the people return to their ancestral homes? Even with this uncertainty Indian authorities showed commendable expedition in tackling the task of rehabilitation. A Resettlement Department with a staff of nearly 8000 *patwārīs* and rural officers was established at Jullundur. Two young Sikh civilians, Tarlok Singh and M. S. Randhawa, were appointed to tackle the problem. Tarlok Singh drew up a Land Resettlement Manual which outlined the policy to be followed. The government took over the houses and lands of Muslim evacuees. Hindu and Sikh peasant refugees crossing the frontier as well as those in refugee camps were directed to specified towns and villages. Each family, irrespective of what is left behind in Pakistan, was temporarily allotted a 'plough unit' of ten acres of land and given loans to buy seed and agricultural equipment.

By the time the winter harvest had been garnered it became apparent that the migration was in fact a permanent transfer of population. The temporary allotments had to be

24 Sir Francis Mudie, governor of west Punjab (Pakistan), wrote to Jinnah on 5 September 1947, regarding the desirability of evicting Sikh colonists from Lyallpur: 'I am telling everyone that I don't care how the Sikhs get across the border; the great thing is to get rid of them as soon as possible. There is still little sign of three lakh Sikhs in Lyallpur moving, but in the end they too will have to go.' G. D. Khosla, *Stern Reckoning*, pp. 314–16; *Muslim League Attack on Sikhs and Hindus*, p. 138.

made permanent and the refugees compensated out of what the Muslims had left behind. This was not easy as not only was the number of Hindus and Sikhs who had come out of west Punjab and the North West Frontier Province somewhat larger than the number of Muslims who had left east Punjab (4,351,477 against 4,286,755), but there was also a considerable difference, both quantitative and qualitative, in the land left behind by the Muslims: the Hindus and Sikhs had left behind 67 lac acres of the very best agricultural land; the Muslims of east Punjab left behind only 47 lac acres of comparatively poor soil. Added to the complications was the fact that in districts such as Karnal, Muslim-owned land was in the possession of Hindu tenants, who were naturally reluctant to let refugees take over cultivation.

Tarlok Singh produced an elaborate scheme for permanent resettlement. Since the productive capacity of land varied, to compute the amount of compensation due, he evolved a 'standard acre,' that is, an acre which could yield between 10 to 11 maunds of wheat. The standard acre was equated to one rupee, and land was assessed in terms of annas fraction of the standard acre. In terms of this standard acre, the Hindu-Sikh refugees who had left behind nearly 4,000,000 units had to be compensated with less than 2,500,000 units. In order to make the distribution of land equitable, a scheme of graded cuts was introduced by which the small landholder suffered very little loss but the rich zamindar was reduced to modest proportions.

Partition brought about revolutionary changes in the economic, social, and political structure of the Punjab. From having been the most prosperous community the Sikhs were reduced to the level of other Indian communities. This applied both to the agriculturist as well as the trading classes. Sikh farmers of western Punjab who owned large estates were reduced in the process of resettlement; those of eastern Punjab were levelled by legislation fixing 30 acres as the maximum holding of land. The urbanite Sikh was worse hit than the peasant. Urban property left behind by Muslims was infinitesimal compared with what the Sikhs left in Pakistan. In addition the Sikh

merchant had to compete both with the Hindu refugee as well as established Hindu tradesmen.

Class barriers were lowered. The temporary allotments of 1947 had, by giving them the same amount of land, elevated menial classes—sweepers, cobblers, potters, and weavers—to the level of the Jat and Rajput agriculturists. The 30-acre ceiling and cooperative farming carried the levelling process further.

Adversity had its redeeming features. Reduction in the size of agricultural holdings forced owners to cultivate their lands themselves rather than rent them out to tenants. Absentee landlordism virtually disappeared. Farmers invested their savings in tractors, sinking tube-wells, and introducing modern methods of cultivation. Agricultural cooperatives, improved seed, and fertilizer stores became a common feature in villages. More attention began to be paid to animal husbandry. With the advent of the community project movement, 'key' villages with facilities for artificial insemination, castration of poorer breeds of bulls, veterinary services, and dairy farming became lucrative sources of income. Another innovation was the development of poultry farming, which had long been neglected. Many farmers took to raising birds imported from foreign countries. In all these sidelines to agriculture Sikh farmers took the lead. Within a few years eastern Punjab changed from a deficit to a surplus region. The impact of the Sikh peasant was felt beyond the Punjab. Because of the paucity of land many were settled in the malarial jungles of the Terai in Uttar Pradesh and in the weed-infested regions of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Sikh refugee farmers showed the mettle of their colonizing forefathers in clearing the jungles and bringing barren lands under the plough. The Sikh trading classes showed the same grit as the peasants in rehabilitating themselves in their professions. Many had been reduced to abject poverty. Prosperous merchants had to start anew hawking their wares in the streets. Girls took to plying tongas; their younger brothers became shoe-shine boys. But seldom, if ever, was a Sikh man, woman, or child seen begging in the streets. And once again the Sikhs earned the respect of their compatriots as men of courage and fortitude.

The change in the political complexion of the Sikh community was significant. The exodus scattered the following of the Sikh leaders of western Punjab and weakened their position. Master Tara Singh retained his hold over the masses by becoming the spokesman of the aggrieved refugees; but others such as Gyani Kartar Singh and even more the urbanite non-Jats such as Ujjal Singh and Hukam Singh[25] were compelled to secure their future by co-operating with the party in power. By contrast, politicians from east Punjab districts gained in strength and stature. Post independence years saw the rise of men such as Pratap Singh Kairon,[26] Swaran Singh,[27] and Gyan Singh Rarewala.[28]

25 Hukam Singh (b.1895), an Arora lawyer from Montgomery, rose to prominence in Akali politics after partition. He, along with Gyani Kartar Singh and Tara Singh, first put forward the demand for a Punjabi Suba. He was elected to the Lok Sabha twice and was made deputy speaker. He withdrew from active support of the 'Suba' in 1961; in 1962 he was elected speaker of the Lok Sabha by Congress support.

26 Pratap Singh Kairon (1901–65), a Dhillon Jat of village Kairon took a degree in political science from the University of Michigan. He joined the Congress party in 1929, was sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment in 1932. He was elected to the Punjab Legislative Assembly it 1936 and again in 1946. He was a member of the Constituent Assembly. He was a minister in the Bhargava Cabinet 1947–9 and the Sachar Cabinet in 1952–6. He became chief minister of the Punjab in 1956, Kairon opposed the 'Suba' demand and was chiefly responsible for crushing the two movements launched in its support. He was a man of unusual drive and unconventional methods of administration. In June 1964 he was compelled to resign following a judicial pronouncement of corruption against him and his wife. He was assassinated on 6 February 1965.

27 Swaran Singh (b.1907), a Purewal Jat lawyer from village Shankar (district Jullundur), was elected to the Punjab Legislative Assembly in 1946 and made development minister. He continued in the government after partition; in 1952 he joined Nehru's cabinet as minister for works, housing, and supply; in 1957 he became minister for steel, mines, and fuel; in 1962 minister of railways; in 1963 minister for food and agriculture, and in 1964 minister of external affairs in the cabinet of Lal Bahadur Shastri.

28 Gyan Singh Rarewala (b.1901), a Cheema Jat of village Rara in Patiala state, was chief minister of PEPSU; minister in the Kairon ministry till 1962 and thereafter the chief opponent of Kairon.

The most significant effect of the migration was to create Sikh concentrations in certain districts of east Punjab. Although the Sikh migrants spread all over India and many thousands went abroad, more than three-fourths of their population remained in what had been the cradle of Sikhism—Malwa. This along with other factors (dealt with in the following chapter) revived the demand for a Sikh state.[29]

The east Punjab government was organized with a temporary capital at Simla. Sir Chandu Lal Trivedi was appointed governor. Gopi Chand Bhargava was elected chief minister by the legislators who came over to the Indian side.

In 1948, Sikh states of the Punjab along with Malerkotla and Nalagarh were merged to form the Patiala and the East Punjab States Union (PEPSU) with Maharajah Yadavendra Singh (who had taken the lead in persuading the princes to join the Indian Union) as *rājpramukh* (governor) and Gyan Singh Rarewala as chief minister. In PEPSU, the Sikhs formed a majority of the population.

PEPSU had a short and unstable career, with the Akalis and the Congress evenly matched in strength. Gyan Singh Rarewala was replaced by the Congressite Raghbir Singh, and, on Raghbir Singh's death, by Brish Bhan. The concentration of Sikh population and its Akali proclivities induced the government to abolish PEPSU in 1956 and merge it into east Punjab.

The first general elections in 1952 gave the Congress party an overall majority in the Punjab. Bhim Sen Sachar became chief minister. During this ministry's tenure, the new capital of the Punjab was built at Chandigarh near the foothills of the

29 Some Sikh members of the East Punjab Assembly presented a list of thirteen demands to the Constituent Assembly. They demanded 50 per cent representation in the East Punjab Legislature; the posts of governor and chief minister of East Punjab to be alternatively Sikh and Hindu; 40 per cent Sikh representation in the provincial service; 5 per cent Sikh representation in the Central Legislature; and at least one Sikh minister and one Sikh deputy minister in the Central Cabinet. If these demands were not conceded then, said the signatories, they would press for a separate Sikh province. *Statesman*, 9 November 1948.

Himalayas.[30] Sachar was displaced by Pratap Singh Kairon in 1956. The Congress party again won the elections in 1957 and 1962, and Kairon remained firmly in the saddle till he was removed from office in June 1964.

30 Chandigarh was designed by a team of foreign experts: Le Corbusier, Jeanneret, Maxwell Fry, and his wife, Jane Drew.

PDF created by Rajesh Arya - Gujarat

18. A State of Their Own

The ideal of a sovereign Sikh state has never been very far from the Sikh mind. Ever since the days of Guru Gobind Singh, Sikh congregations have chanted the litany *raj karey ga Khalsa*—the Khalsa shall rule—at the end of their daily prayers; innumerable Sikhs gave their lives to achieve this ambition. The establishment of the kingdom of Maharajah Ranjit Singh confirmed the belief that it was their destiny to rule. The fall of the kingdom was regarded as a temporary setback. And, despite their early loyalty towards the British, when home rule for India began to be talked about Sikh leaders began to say: 'If the British have to go, it is only right that the Punjab should be restored to the Sikhs from whom they wrongfully seized it.'

The Sikhs had to contend with changing concepts of government as well as with the views of Hindus and Muslims. The British introduced the notion of the rule of the majority, that is, that neither property nor prowess mattered as much as numbers. And in the matter of numbers the Sikhs were a bare 12–13 per cent of the population of the Punjab and a little over 1 per cent of the population of India. If the right to govern was to be determined only by the counting of heads, then most of India would be ruled by the Hindus and the Muslim majority areas, including the Punjab, by the Muslims. The Sikhs' energies were therefore directed toward frustrating Muslim designs of ruling the Punjab.

The Sikh leaders' first move was to turn the democratic argument against the Muslims. They aligned themselves with

the Hindus in demanding joint electorates and abolition of privileges for minority communities because they felt that these measures would dilute Muslim communalism. When the Muslims succeeded in securing separate electorates and privileges, the Sikhs pressed for the same for themselves and began to ask for weightage so that their strength, combined with that of the Hindus, could outweigh that of the Muslims. They pursued these tactics for almost twenty years till they realized that no government could fairly reduce a Muslim majority to a minority. A third line of resistance was evolved, viz., to ask for the redrawing of the boundaries of the Punjab so that the predominantly Muslim areas of the west might be separated from the predominantly non-Muslim areas of the east. Scant notice was taken of this proposal.[1] The Government of India Act of 1935 confirmed the worst fears of the Sikhs. The Punjab, like other provinces of India, attained autonomy. The Muslim dominated Unionist Party resumed control and, with enhanced powers, continued its policy of reducing Sikh representation to its numerical deserts.

The concept of the Sikh state was resuscitated. It gathered strength as the Muslim demand for Pakistan grew. In the critical years preceding the relinquishing of power by Britain, Sikh leaders allowed themselves to be guided by the leaders of the National Congress, instead of boldly demanding a sovereign Sikh state (which at the time the Sikh masses wanted), and put forward such an idea only as an argument against Pakistan. All manner of considerations—historic, economic, hydrographic, and geographic—were advanced to inflate the size of the non-Muslim part of the Punjab so that what remained would make Pakistan a mockery. No one took their line of approach seriously.[2]

1 This was done at the Second Round Table Conference in 1931. See Minorities Committee, III, Appendix XVII, pp. 1435–7.

2 At the end of the war, a 'Sikh homeland' plan was evolved by the Communists. This was on the eve of the 1945–6 elections and was designed to appease the Sikh masses, who had been angered by the Party's enthusiastic support of Pakistan. The 'Sikh homeland' scheme was propounded by G. Adhikari, who had only two years earlier dismissed it as 'not the demand of progressive Sikh nationalism'.

As the date for the division of the Punjab drew closer, Sikh leaders found themselves in a quandary, not knowing whether to throw in their lot with India or with Pakistan. Jinnah told them that if they opted for Pakistan he would guarantee them protection of life, property, freedom to practice their religion and the privileges they had enjoyed under British rule.[3] On the other hand, leaders of the Congress, with whom they had much closer contacts than with those of the Muslim League, often assured them that they should look upon India as their home. Speaking in Gurdwara Sis Ganj in Delhi in March 1931, Mahatma Gandhi said: 'Sikh friends have no reason to fear that the Congress party will betray them. For, the moment it does so, the Congress would not only thereby seal its own doom but that of the country too. Moreover the Sikhs are a great people. They know how to safeguard their rights by the exercise of arms if it should come to that.'[4]

While negotiations for the transfer of power from British to Indian hands were going on, Jawaharlal Nehru, speaking at the Congress Committee meeting at Calcutta in July 1946, had sounded an even more reassuring tone: 'The brave Sikhs of Punjab are entitled to special consideration. I see nothing wrong in an area and a set up in the north wherein the Sikhs can also experience the glow of freedom.'[5]

Sikh leaders decided not to pledge the future of their community to the promises of Jinnah who had done nothing to prevent the Muslims of north-western Punjab savaging Sikhs. Centuries

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In a letter to Prof. I. N. Madan dated 25 January 1943, Adhikari wrote: '"Azad Punjab" is not the demand of progressive Sikh nationalism. It is a demand which is a counterblast to the demand for self-determination by the Muslims in the Punjab. It is in the interest of the Sikh people that they accept the demand of the Muslims of the Punjab and get them to accept their own rights of self-determination.'

3 Jinnah met the Maharajah of Patiala and his Prime Minister, H. S. Malik, ICS, in the house of Malik's elder brother, Sir T. S. Malik, in New Delhi. See also Chapter XXVIII of *A History of the Sikh People* by Gopal Singh.

4 *Young India*, 16 March 1931.

5 *The Statesman*, 1 July 1946.

of Sikh-Muslim hostility also cast their baneful shadows on the negotiations with Jinnah. Sikhs felt securer among Hindus, with whom they had more in common than with the Muslims. When the line of division was finally settled, almost to a man half the community which found itself on the Pakistani side of the border abandoned their homes, lands and properties, and trekked into an uncertain future in India. Those reluctant to leave Pakistan were driven out with slaughter.

In the lawlessness that prevailed during the time of partition, some Sikhs were tempted to establish a government of their own in eastern Punjab. Another version of the sau sākhī was unearthed; it predicted the crown for Yadavendra Singh of Patiala in Samvat 1890 (1947); in Moti Bagh palace the popular afterdinner topic was of 'Greater Patiala'. The more down-to-earth Harindra Singh of Faridkot propagated the idea of a Sikh state minus the Maharajah of Patiala. Sikhs of the INA vaunted their ability to effect a military coup; their visions, like those of the princes, were but vaporous creations of minds that dreamt much but dared very little.

The partition created a new situation. Sikh agricultural migration from West Pakistan was halted about the Ghaggar river, with the result that in some tehsils of east Punjab and in the princely states the Sikhs came to form a majority of the population.[6] For the first time the democratic argument could, in certain areas, be put forward in support of a Sikh state. Post-partition conditions made many Sikhs doubt the wisdom of having thrown in their lot with the Hindus. The scramble for land and urban property left by Muslim evacuees created ill-will between them and Hindu refugees as well as the Hindus of Haryana who had taken possession of lands left by Muslims.

Sikh cultivators were also piqued by administrative delays in the granting of rehabilitation loans. Sikh trading classes of western Punjab were more severely hit. Their capital was lost. There were no Muslim traders in east Punjab whose place they could take, and the government was not in a position to give them

6 Table showing the proportion of Hindus and Sikhs in 1951 on p. 291.

enough money to restart their businesses. Too proud to beg, their pride did not prevent them from being extremely bitter with a government which could never do enough for them; and bitter with the Hindus, whose suffering they minimized. They asked themselves: 'The Muslims got Pakistan, the Hindus got Hindustan; but what did we Sikhs get out of it?' In that frame of mind, it was not difficult to fan the smouldering fire of resentment against fate and create visions of a Sikh Utopia.

The government showed little imagination in dealing with the Sikhs. Road transport over which the Sikhs had virtually a monopoly, was nationalized. In Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, Sikh settlers were regarded with suspicion natural towards more virile strangers. In Calcutta their control over taxi and bus services had to be ended to provide employment for Hindu refugees coming from East Pakistan. The abolition of separate electorates and communal privileges and insistence on competitive paper-examinations for entrance into services (including official cadres of the armed forces) adversely affected the Sikhs. It also increased the incidence of apostasy in the army and the civilian services. Many Sikh civil servants and soldiers found that in a secular state, they did not have to be *kesadhāris* to hold their jobs; nor did being clean-shaven prejudice their chances of promotion. Orthodox Sikhs readily ascribed this to the machinations of a wily Hindu government.

In 1948 the government took two steps which nurtured the concept of a Sikh state. Punjab's princely states were merged into one unit—the Patiala and East Punjab States Union. PEPSU had the handsome Sikh maharajah, Yadavendra Singh, as its rājpramukh; a Sikh aristocrat, Gian Singh Rarewala, as chief minister; and the majority of its population was Sikh. All that was required was to attach the Sikh majority districts of east Punjab to PEPSU to make the Sikh state a reality.

The second step taken in 1957 gave the Sikhs the excuse they had been waiting for. The Punjab was declared a bilingual state with both Punjabi and Hindi as its languages. The Sikhs (in these matters, the Akalis spoke for the community) were quick to

Table 18.1

North-western districts	Hindus %	Sikhs %	Northern & south-eastern districts	Hindus %	Sikhs %
(a) *Punjab*			(a) *Punjab*		
Hoshiarpur	73.2	26.2	Hissar	91.3	7.7
Jullundur	42.6	56.5	Rohtak	98.5	0.7
Ludhiana	37.4	61.7	Gurgaon	82.1	0.7
Ferozepur	38.7	59.6	Karnal	90.3	8.9
Amritsar	27.7	70.7	Ambala	72.2	24.6
Gurdaspur	45.5	46.6			
(b) *PEPSU*			(b) *PEPSU*		
Patiala	52.1	47.1	Sangrur	65.4	33.4
Barnala	21.0	71.0	Mohindergarh	99.0	0.6
Bhatinda	21.6	78.1	Kohistan	89.0	9.0
Kapurthala	35.5	63.6			
Fatehgarh Sahib	33.6	65.2			

	Hindus	*Sikhs*	*Others*
Punjab	63.5	33.4	3.1
PEPSU	48.8	48.8	1.9
Punjab and PEPSU	62.3	35.0	2.7

Note: India (Republic), Census Commissioner, *Census of India 1951,* vol. VIII, Part II-A, pp. 298–300. In 1956, the states of Punjab and PEPSU were merged, and some of their districts combined.

fasten their resentment on the language issue.[7] They argued that the spoken language of the Punjab, barring Haryana, was Punjabi

7 The Indian National Congress had committed itself to the principle of linguistic provinces. But after independence, its attitude to the subject changed—inasmuch as it concerned the Punjab and the Sikhs. The Constituent Assembly appointed a commission under Justice Dar to report on the feasibility of redrawing state boundaries but excluded the Punjab from its terms of reference. The commission pronounced against any change and despite the limitation prescribed opined as follows: 'The formation of linguistic provinces is sure to give rise to a demand for the separation of linguistic groups elsewhere. Claims have already been made by the Sikhs, Jats and others and these demands will in course of time be intensified and become live issues if once the formation of linguistic provinces is decided upon.' *Dar Commission Report,* p. 120.

bances created by Telugu-speaking people and the demand for a Marathi-speaking state encouraged Sikh agitation for the Punjabi Suba.[9]

At this critical juncture Punjabi Hindus, notably organizations connected with the Arya Samaj and its political counterpart, the Jan Sangh, played a very dubious role. They had started a campaign during the 1951 census operations to persuade Punjabi-speaking Hindus to disown their mother tongue, Punjabi, and declare it to be Hindi. The campaign was revived with renewed vigour for the census scheduled to take place in 1961. Perhaps they had reason to fear Sikh communalism and felt that Sikhs may use the linguistic argument and press for a redrawing of

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standard, while the other languages would be taught as a compulsory language from the last class of the primary state up to the matriculation standard and in the case of girls in the middle classes only. Provision was made for children whose mother tongue was other than the regional language, provided there were 40 students in the school or 10 in each class requiring instruction in the other language.

PEPSU was also linguistically divided for educational purposes. The Hindi-speaking region consisted of the districts of Mahendragarh and Kohistan (including Chhachrauli tehsil minus Dera Bassi) and the tehsils of Jind and Narwana. The rest of the state was declared to be the Punjabi zone. In one zone Hindi in Devnagri script, in the other Punjabi in Gurmukhi script were made the media of instruction and in both the other language was made compulsory from the fourth primary class upwards. There was no such provision for choice of the medium of instruction in the Panjab.

9 The Shiromani Akali Dal issued a manifesto stating as follows: 'The true test of democracy, in the opinion of the Shiromani Akali Dal, is that the minorities should feel that they are really free and equal partners in the destiny of their country; (a) to bring home this sense of freedom to the Sikhs, it is vital that there should be a Punjabi speaking language and culture. This will not only be in fulfillment of the pre-partition Congress programme and pledges, but also in entire conformity with the universally recognized principles governing formation of provinces, (b) The Shiromani Akali pal is in favour of formation of provinces on a linguistic and cultural basis throughout India, but it holds it is a question of life and death for the Sikhs for a new Punjab to be created immediately, (c) The Shiromani Akali Dal has reason to believe that a Punjabi speaking province may give Sikhs the needful security. It believes in a Punjabi speaking province as an autonomous unit of India.' *The Spokesman*, 29 August 1951.

boundaries to their own advantage. The move widened the gulf between the two communities.[10]

In the winter of 1953, the Government of India appointed a commission to go into the problem of redrawing state boundaries. Although at the time the most disputed issue was that of the Punjab, no Sikh was nominated to this commission.[11] The case for a Punjabi Suba was presented by the Akalis. Several Hindu bodies opposed the demand by asking for the amalgamation of Himachal Pradesh (which was overwhelmingly Hindu) and the Punjab into a *mahā* (greater) Punjab. The commission, which made its report two years later, rejected the case for a Punjabi-speaking state on the ground that a 'minimum measure of agreement for making a change' in the existing set-up did not exist.[12]

Master Tara Singh denounced the report as a 'decree of Sikh annihilitation'.[13] He said with some justification that if there had been no Sikhs, Punjabi would have been given a state of its own like the other major languages recognized by the Indian constitution; the refusal to concede a Punjabi state was therefore tantamount to discrimination against the Sikhs. He threatened to start a passive resistance movement. Hindus led by the Arya Samaj–Jan Sangh groups launched a counter-campaign to 'save

10 'Hindus themselves are responsible for their alienation, insecurity and frustration,' writes Professor Gopal Singh of Himachal University. 'By disowning Punjabi as their mother tongue, they have become rootless and have alienated themselves from the culture, history and society of Punjab, thus leaving the Sikhs to claim Punjabi culture and Punjab history as theirs. They 'hang' in Punjab like a tree in the air having no roots in the soil they inhabit.... During the years 1949–51, Arya Samajists like the late Lala Jagat Narain, the then secretary of the Punjab Pradesh Congress, mobilized Hindus to declare Hindi as their mother tongue in the 1951 census. He did so in the period 1979–80 for the 1981 census. Interestingly, many proponants of Hindi soon after independence were in the Congress, and many were active supporters and leaders of the Hindi Swaraksha Samiti and Hindi Sangathan, for example, Pawan Kumar of Patiala.' *Punjab Today*, pp. 27–8.

11 Its members were S. Fazal Ali, H. N. Kunzru, and K. M. Panikkar.

12 *States Reorganization Commission Report.*

13 *The Spokesman*, 19 October 1955.

Hindi'. Communal tension led to rioting between Hindus and Sikhs in many towns.[14]

The government awoke to the unpleasant reality that the notion of a Sikh state had been reactivated in the minds of the Sikhs and the PEPSU had in fact become the nucleus of a Sikhistan. It decided to merge PEPSU into the Punjab and so to create a state in which the Hindus would form a permanent majority of 65 per cent against the Sikhs' 35 per cent. Akali leaders were hoodwinked into believing that the merger was a step toward the establishment of a Punjabi Suba.[15] They joined the Congress party en masse. The truth dawned on them after a few months. Having acquiesced in the liquidation of PEPSU, they were even further away from achieving their Suba.

Instead of putting up a united front, Sikh leaders exhibited a lamentable absence of unity. The chief supporters of Master Tara Singh in his demand for the Punjabi Suba were Gyani

14 The Punjab government issued an order banning the shouting of slogans. The Akalis defied the ban as a countravention of civil liberties. More than 12,000 were arrested.

Of the many slogans for and against the Suba, two summed up the opposite points of view. The Hindu agitators—'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan' versus the Sikhs—'*Dhoti, topi, Jumna par*' (men who wear dhotis and topis, that is, Hindus, will be sent across the Jumna).

Among the leaders arrested in this agitation were Master Tara Singh, Gyani Kartar Singh, and Hukam Singh.

15 The mirage was created through a 'Regional Formula' whereby members of the Punjab Legislature were divided into two groups: one comprising those elected from the Punjabi-speaking region and the other from the Hindi-speaking region. It was provided that any measure affecting a particular region would first be considered by members of that region before coming up for plenary consideration. The Akalis were naive enough to proclaim that the abolition of PEPSU and the 'Regional Formula' was the first victory in the battle for the Punjabi Suba. The Sachar-language of each region at the district level and below would be the language of the region. The Punjab, in effect, was declared a bilingual state recognizing both Punjabi (in Gurmukhi script) and Hindi (in Devnagri script) as the official languages of the state. Departments of Punjabi and Hindi were set up; provision was made for the establishment of a Punjabi University (opened in 1962 at Patiala).

Kartar Singh and Hukam Singh, both from western Punjab, and hence somewhat uncertain of their political future. Both became quiescent and joined the Congress party; one to become a minister in the Punjab government; the other, somewhat later, became speaker of the Lok Sabha. The Congress was also fortunate in finding in Pratap Singh Kairon, the Chief Minister of the Punjab, a man of dynamic energy who was at the same time passionately opposed to the Akalis.

Master Tara Singh was left virtually alone to lead the struggle for the Punjabi Suba. The Sikh electorate gave him its support. In the general elections of 1957, although the Congress won a majority of seats, the Akalis were able to hold the predominantly Sikh constituencies.[16] Three years later Master Tara Singh overcame the combined strength of the Congress, Communists, and other anti-Suba elements in the SGPC elections by capturing 136 out of 140 seats, thus proving that the majority of Sikhs supported the Punjabi Suba.

Master Tara Singh followed up his triumph by carrying a 'Now or Never' resolution (30 April 1960). Before the party could mature its plans, Chief Minister Kairon ordered the arrest of the leaders of the Akali Dal, including Master Tara Singh. The Master appointed Sant Fateh Singh, a granthi-cum-Social worker, to act as 'dictator' and to continue the agitation for the Punjabi Suba. Fateh Singh organized passive resistance on a massive scale. According to the Akali Dal, over 57,000 (according to the government, only 23,000) men were gaoled in the movement. Matters came to a head when Fateh Singh went on a fast unto death. The passive resistance and the fast were called off (9 January 1961) on an assurance from the government that Sikh grievances would be looked into.[17]

16 The Akalis won 19 seats in the Punjab Assembly; they carried most of the Sikh majority constituencies. Brish Bhan, who had been Chief Minister of PEPSU and a supporter of the merger, was defeated by Sant Harcharan Singh Longowal who later emerged as the leader of the Akali Dal.

17 With his usual candour, Master Tara Singh admitted that the primary motive for asking for the Suba was 'to protect Sikh religion and improve the position of the Sikhs'; the language issue was secondary. 'You might

The negotiations with the government did not bear any fruit. Nehru refused to accept the contention that denial of a Punjabi-speaking province amounted to discrimination against the Sikhs. In sheer exasperation Master Tara Singh undertook to fast unto death unless the Suba was conceded. He began his fast on 15 August 1961, in the Golden Temple complex.[18] The government refused to yield. After 43 days without food, the old warrior's spirit was broken, and he gave up his self-imposed ordeal.

Master Tara Singh saved his life but killed his political career and dealt a grievous blow to the cause of a Sikh-majority state. He was arraigned at the Akal Takht[19] and found guilty of proving false to his oath and to the hallowed tradition of martyrdom. He was sentenced to clean the shoes of the congregation for five

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declare it Punjabi language of the whole of India, would that help the Sikhs?' he asked. Tara Singh elaborated the demand, stating that Sikh majority would improve their status in the state; it would preclude governmental interference in gurdwara affairs, give better status to Punjabi, and make Gurmukhi the sole script. With this statement began the rift between Tara Singh and Fateh Singh. 'The Sant Fateh Singh is a religious man,' said Tara Singh, explaining the other's insistence that the demand was purely linguistic, 'he is not a politician and might have been misled.' *The Spokesman*, 16 January 1961.

18 Tara Singh made a statement during the fast explaining his position: 'If we face the problem open-mindedly then the situation can be summed up in three sentences:

1. A national principle has been accepted that to make the people feel the glow of freedom, states should be created on the continguity of language affording full scope for development of one national language in one state.
2. This principle has been implemented in other parts of India and even in Punjab an area has been demarcated which the government experts feel is a Punjabi-speaking area.
3. This Punjabi-speaking area, with any adjustments that the expert opinion may deem necessary, is not being afforded the status of a state, simply because the Hindus do not agree to it.'

19 Tara Singh pleaded: 'If I have committed a mistake, correct me. If I have done the right thing, march with me. If I have acted treacherously, punish me.' *The Spokesman*, 6 November 1961.

days. Although, he carried out his penance, he was not forgiven by his community. A few months later, both the SGPC and the Akali Dal voted him out of power. Sant Fateh Singh took over as the leader of the Sikhs.

The government pressed home its triumph over the supporters of the Sikh state.[20] A three-man commission[21] under the chairmanship of S. R. Das was appointed to hear the 'grievances of the Sikhs of the Punjab'. The Akalis expressed lack of confidence in the personnel of the commission and its terms of reference; they asked the Sikhs to boycott its proceedings. The community displayed remarkable unanimity in disassociating itself from the proceedings of the Das Commission.[22]

The general election of 1962 did little to clear the atmosphere.[23] The Congress party won in most mixed constituencies;

20 In the Punjab Assembly, Chief Minister Kairon compelled all the sitters-on-the-fence to make unequivocal declarations disavowing the Sikh state. At the centre, Hukam Singh, who had been one of the fathers of the Suba plan, confessed to his past errors: 'If really there is a villian for this activity, I am here. And if he is to hang, let me be hanged.' *The Spokesman*, 4 September 1961.

21 Members of the commission were S. R. Das (chairman and ex-Chief Justice of the Supreme Court), C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer, and M. C. Chagla (former Chief Justice of Bombay, Indian Ambassador in the US, Indian High Commissioner in London, and later, Minister of Education.

22 Five men tendered evidence before the commission in favour of the government; they included Rajinder Singh Bhatia, editor of *Quami Ekta*, and Dr Gopal Singh Dardi who as editor of the defunct *Liberator*, had been an enthusiastic supporter of the Sikh state. Before the Das Commission, the same Dardi listed the 'privileges' which the Sikhs enjoyed from the Nehru government. Dardi (b.1917) was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, then sent as ambassador to Bulgaria and the Caribbean. He was made chairman of the high power committee on minorities. He was amongst the handful of Sikhs who supported the army action in the Golden Temple and was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Goa. Dardi is the author of several books on the Sikhs, including a four-volume translation of the Granth.

23 In the. Punjab, the Akalis won 19 seats: in the Lok Sabha, 3. Chief Minister Kairon himself had the narrowest of escapes, retaining his seat only by a dubious majority of 34 seats.

Among the notable returns was Kapur Singh for the Lok Sabha. Kapur

Akali supporters of the Punjabi Suba carried the majority of Sikh voters. Before the Akalis could mature their plans to make another bid for the Suba, the Chinese invaded Indian frontiers.[24] The Sikhs suspended their agitation and eagerly rose to the defence of their country.

Before he died on 27 May 1964, the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had occasion to gauge the emotional upsurge in the Sikh masses and doubted the wisdom of opposing their demand for the Punjabi Suba. In a speech delivered at Rajpura he conceded that Punjabi was the dominant language of the Punjab and instructed the Chief Minister, Pratap Singh Kairon, to declare Punjab a unilingual state.[25] Kairon was at the time in a very shaky position. Allegations of nepotism and corruption had been levelled against him. He felt that any concessions made to the Akalis might be construed as signs of weakness and jeopardize his position as chief minister. Kairon reassured Nehru that the Suba agitation did not have the support of the Sikhs but only of the Akalis who had no fight left in them.

Nehru's successor, Lal Bahadur Shastri, and his Home Minister, Gulzari Lal Nanda, continued the policy of denial. The situation changed when Pratap Singh Kairon was found guilty of corruption and nepotism and compelled to resign. On the advice of Swaran Singh, External Affairs Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri manoeuvred the elevation of a nondescript, small-town politician, Ram Kishen,[26] as Chief Minister.

Singh had been a member of the Indian Civil Service till his suspension in 1948. He was responsible for much of the Suba literature. Gurnam Singh, retired judge of the Punjab High Court, was returned to the Punjab Assembly and became leader of the opposition.

24 The Punjabis' contribution in men and material equalled that of the rest of the states of India put together. The only non-Punjabi district to exceed the Punjab districts' contribution in gold was Ganganagar in Rajasthan. Ganganagar is largely settled by Sikh refugees.

25 P. C. Joshi (ed.), *Punjabi Suba—A Symposium*, p. 69.

26 Ram Kishen (b.1919) hails from Jhang. In 1952 he was elected to the Punjab legislature and was a minister under Kairon in 1962. He was Chief Minister of Punjab from July 1964 to July 1965.

The Suba movement now led by Sant Fateh Singh gained fresh momentum. It received encouragement from across the border as Radio Pakistan began a regular series of broadcasts assuring the Sikhs of Pakistani support in demanding their homeland. Tension between India and Pakistan mounted; clashes on the borders escalated into open war. On 1 September 1965 Pakistani forces crossed the international border at Chhamb-Jaurian in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Five days later, the Indian army did likewise by launching an offensive towards Lahore.

The Akalis did not exploit the situation but declared their unqualified support to the government. Once again Sikh soldiers crossed swords with the Pakistanis and Sikh peasantry rallied to the support of their fighting forces, carrying food and help to the battlefront. Amongst the many officers who distinguished themselves in the 22-day war the most outstanding was Lt. General Harbaksh Singh to whom went the credit of halting the Pakistani tank offensive into Indian territory. Of all the states of the Indian Union, Punjab's contribution in aid of defence was the highest; of all the districts of India the top contributions came from Ganganagar in Rajasthan, largely populated by Sikh farmers. Insinuations of Sikh disloyalty so assiduously spread by anti-Sikh elements were thus silenced.[27]

27 Hukum Singh had this to say about the way the central government under Shastri dealt with the issue: 'After denying this fundamental linguistic right for many years, Prime Minister Shastri appointed a Parliamentary Committee, in October 1965, under my chairmanship, to prepare a report on the Punjabi Suba issue. This was done in accordance with the fresh promises made to the Sikhs during the September 1965 war with Pakistan. The intention of the Government then was to use me against my community, secure an adverse report, and then reject the demand, even after 18 long years of deliberate frustrating delays. When my report was nearly ready Mrs Indira Gandhi went to Mr Chavan and said she had heard that Sardar Hukum Singh was going to give a report in favour of the Punjabi Suba, and that he should be stopped.... Lal Bahadur Shastri continued the policy of Jawaharlal Nehru, and was dead against the demand of Punjabi Suba, as was Nehru. So, when he was urged by Mrs Gandhji to stop Hukam Singh, he did not waste any time. Mr Shastri called Mr Gulzari Lal Nanda,

After cessation of hostilities, a sub-committee of the Cabinet was constituted under the chairmanship of Indira Gandhi to examine the demand for the Punjabi Suba.[28] It reported in favour

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then Home Minister, to his residence, and conveyed to him the concern about the feared report. Every effort was made by Mrs Gandhi, Mr Shastri and Mr Nanda to stop me from making my report. But when nothing succeeded, the Congress forestalled the Parliamentary Committee Report by agreeing to reorganize Punjab by a vague resolution dated 9 March while the committee report was signed on 15 March 1966, a week later. It was a deliberate attempt to by-pass this Committee, and undermine its importance.

The Parliamentary Committee had come to these conclusions: (i) The present State of Punjab be reorganized on a linguistic basis (ii) The Punjabi region specified in the First Schedule to the Punjabi Regional Committee Order, 1957 should form a unilingual Punjabi State.

The government by-passed the Committee and forestalled its report. The subsequent reference to the Shah Commission, was loaded heavily against Punjab. Making the 1961 Census as the basis and the tehsil (instead of village) as the unit was a deliberate design to punish the Sikhs. The language returns in the 1961 Census were on communal lines when Punjabi-speaking Hindus falsely declared Hindi as their language. Therefore, the demarcation had to be on communal rather than on a linguistic basis. Consequently merit was again ignored and justice denied. Naturally tensions between the two communities increased. If Punjabi Suba had been demarcated simply on a linguistic basis and not on false returns of 1961, there would not have been any extremist movement. Tension between Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab is bound to continue unless the communal section of Hindus see wisdom and retrace their steps by acknowledging Punjabi as their mother tongue.' *Betrayal of the Sikhs* by Hukam Singh, quoted in *Hindu-Sikh Conflict: Causes and Cure,* (Transasiatic India Times, London, 1983, pp. 21–2.

28 In her dealings with the Punjab and the Sikhs, Mrs Gandhi practised a kind of duplicity more becoming of a small-time politician than a farsighted statesman. While appearing to concede the Suba, she first deprived it of its capital Chandigarh and then made its transfer to the Punjab conditional on the Punjab giving up Fazilka and Abohar, which were predominantly Punjabi speaking, to Haryana, even though they were not contiguous to it. This was revealed by Hukam Singh in an article he wrote just before his death and which was published by *The Indian Express* in its issue of 11 April 1983. Mrs Gandhi brazenly confirmed the allegation of duplicity and justified it on the grounds of retaining support of the Hindus.

of redrawing the boundaries of the Punjab on a linguistic basis. Lal Bahadur Shastri's sudden death at Tashkent on 10 January, 1966 ended the chapter of the central government's open hostility to the concept of the Punjabi Suba. Indira Gandhi, who succeeded Shastri as Prime Minister and had shared her father's initial aversion to the Suba, now sensed that her party stalwarts were in favour of conceding it. She changed her stance by appearing to be even-handed, but loading the dice against a Suba government running smoothly. On 10 March 1966 the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution to the effect that 'out of the existing State of Punjab a State with Punjabi as the State language be formed. The Government is requested to take necessary steps for this purpose.'

There was strong opposition to the resolution. But Kamraj, president of the Congress and known as the 'King Maker' for having got Mrs Gandhi elected Prime Minister, carried the majority with him.[29] 'How can the Punjabis be denied the benefit of the very national principle which the people of the other States were already enjoying, the right to have, live and work under their own linguistic State?' he argued. The Defence Minister, Y. B. Chavan, conscious of the Sikhs' unqualified support in the hostilities against Pakistan, supported him. He said: 'A decision on the demand for a Punjabi State could not be delayed because of the geographical position of the Punjab.'[30] Prime Minister

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In her memoirs *My Truth* she writes: 'I went to Y. B. Chavan and said I had heard that Sardar Hukam Singh (Speaker of the Lok Sabha) was going to give a report in favour of the Punjabi Suba and that he should be stopped.... I was very bothered and I went round seeing everybody. To concede the Akali demand would mean abandoning a position to which it [the Congress] was firmly committed and letting down its Hindu supporters in the projected Punjabi Suba; not to do so would precipitate a Sikh agitation which would certainly be violent.'

29 Morarji Desai, later Deputy Prime Minister, decried the demand as communal. He was supported by Biju Patnaik, erstwhile Chief Minister of Orissa (found guilty of corruption by a Commission) and Dr Ram Subhag Singh, a minister in the central cabinet. See P. C. Joshi (ed.), *Punjabi Suba—A Symposium*, p. 82.

30 The *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 10 March 1956.

Indira Gandhi gave in: 'The Working Committee has passed a resolution and now we [the government] have to implement it,' she said.[31]

The decision of the Indian National Congress was accepted by all the political parties of India save the Bharatiya Jan Sangh which condemned the Congress resolution as 'a blow to the forces of unity and integration of the country.'[32] The Jan Sangh was at the time dominated by Punjabi Hindus. Professor Balraj Madhok, its president-elect and Dr Baldev Prakash, President of the provincial Punjab unit, were the most vociferous opponents of the Suba. The party organized mass demonstrations. In many Punjab towns, notably Panipat, there was looting, arson and bloodshed. Though violent, the counter-Suba agitation was of very short duration because the decision to bifurcate the old State was supported not only by the Sikhs but also by the Hindi-speaking populace of Haryana and Himachal. The only elements out of step with the march of events were the Punjabi Hindus. It soon dawned upon them that, by denying their mother-tongue, they were cutting their own roots in the Punjab and, as a Punjabi-speaking people, would become alien elements in Hindi-speaking Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.

A Boundary Commission consisting of Justice J. C. Shah (chairman), S. Dutt and M. M. Philip was appointed on 23 April 1966 to 'examine the existing boundary of the Hindi and Punjabi regions of the present State of Punjab and recommend what changes, if any, were necessary to secure the linguistic homogeneity of Punjab and Haryana.' The terms of reference were designed to deprive the Punjabi Suba of its legitimate rights. For one, the commission was told to take the census figures of 1961 which everyone knew were unreliable because of the false returns made by a large section of Punjabi Hindus regarding their mother tongue.[33] For another, instead of the village being

31 Ibid.

32 P. C. Joshi (ed.), *Punjabi Suba—A Symposium*, p. 86.

33 As early as 1955 the States Reorganization Commission had recorded 'the repudiation by large sections of the Hindu community of the Punjabi language as their mother tongue. This led, during the last census

taken as a unit as it had always been in the past, the commission was required to see that its recommendations did not involve the breaking up of existing tehsils. The real bone of contention was Chandigarh which was in Kharar tehsil. The 1961 Census showed that 55.2 per cent of its population was Hindi speaking. So Justice Shah and Philip had no qualms of conscience in recommending that Chandigarh should go to Haryana. S. Dutt dissented and recommended that the city go to the Punjab. There was an uproar over the majority verdict giving Chandigarh, built specifically as a capital for the Punjab, to Haryana. The central government got out of the tangle woven by itself by declaring the city a Union Territory to be shared by both States. Thus, the Punjabi Suba was conceded but without a capital exclusively of its own. The Punjab was given an area of 20,254 square miles comprising the districts of Jullundur, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Amritsar, Patiala, Bhatinda, Kapurthala and parts of Gurdaspur, Ambala and Sangrur. It had a population of 115,84 lakhs of whom about 56–60 per cent were Sikhs.

Haryana got 16,835 square miles of territory with a population of 75.27 lakhs, of whom 5 per cent were Sikhs. Himachal comprised 10,215 square miles with a population of 11.96 lakhs, of whom barely 2 per cent were Sikhs.

Though the new boundaries did not strictly follow the linguistic distribution of the people, the establishment of the Punjabi Suba succeeded in gathering nearly 80 per cent of the Sikh population in one State. The only other large concentration of Sikhs was in the capital city, Delhi—where they formed a little over 7 per cent of the population and numbered a little over 3 lakhs.

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operation to a situation in which the separate tabulation of Hindi and Punjabi speaking people had to be abandoned.' After the 1951 census the Union Home Minister said in Parliament: 'It is believed that the returns submitted on the question of language had been generally incorrect in large, parts of Punjab, that is as to the mother tongue of the persons concerned, whether it is Punjabi or Hindi.' By the 1961 Census the Hindi campaign had become even stronger.

The Suba belied the fears of its detractors. Instead of increasing tension between Hindus and Sikhs, there was a sudden defusion of communal passions built up over the years of agitation and counter-agitation. Extremist sections of both communities found themselves isolated. It took the wind out of the sails of the clamour for a sovereign Sikh State. 'The Punjabi Suba is our last demand,' said Sant Fateh Singh voicing at the time sentiments of the overwhelming majority of his community, and continued, 'I think this demand for a Sikh State asked for by Master Tara Singh, a shrinking group of Akalis, will end for good, it was a useless demand and has practically fizzled out.'[34] At the same time, it punctured the self-inflated importance of the rabidly anti-Suba, anti-Sikh elements among Punjabi Hindus. This was reflected in the dramatic decline in popularity of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh. It was reduced to agitating for maintaining the Suba as a bilingual state with the freedom for parents to choose what language they wanted their children to study at school.

To facilitate the redrawing of boundaries, President's Rule was imposed on the Punjab with Dharma Vira of the ICS as Governor. As soon as the boundary lines were drawn, new governments were constituted for the three states that came into existence. Gurmukh Singh Musafir[35] replaced Ram Kishen as Chief Minister of the Punjab, Bhagwat Dayal Sharma and Dr Parmar became the Chief Ministers of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh respectively.

It was no mere coincidence that no sooner was the old Punjab divided on a linguistic basis, all the three states carved out of

34 P. C. Joshi (ed.) *Punjabi Suba—A Symposium*, p. 120.

35 Gurmukh Singh Musafir (1899-1984) was born at Adhwal, Dist. Campbellpore; a Chadda Khatri, he used 'Musafir' as a poetic pseudonym. He was a Jathedar Akal Takht in 1930 and Secretary, S.G.P.C. in 1932. He took part in the Quit India Movement (1942–5) and was gaoled. He was also a member of the Constituent Assembly (1947) and president, Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee for ten years from 1952. He was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1957 from Amritsar and, later, to the Rajya Sabha.

it made rapid strides in agriculture, industry and horticulture. The Punjabi Suba led the rest of India in modernizing farming techniques, with Haryana following a close second. Even mountain-locked Himachal Pradesh forged ahead to become the main supplier of fruits and potatoes to the rest of the country.[36]

General Elections took place in February 1967. A United Front consisting of the Akalis, the Jan Sangh and the Communists won an overall majority of 53 seats in a house of 104, beating the Congress party with only 43 seats to second place. Amongst the Congress casualties was the Chief Minister, Musafir, who was beaten by an up and coming young communist, Satyapal Dang.[37]

The United Front chose Gurnam Singh[38] as its leader. Among his ministerial colleagues was Dr Baldev Prakash of the Jan Sangh, till recently one of the most virulent opponents of the Suba, Lachhman Singh Gill, an equally ardent protagonist of the Suba, and the communist, Satyapal Dang.

It soon transpired that the Akalis, who carried the Sikh masses with them on the demand for the Punjabi Suba, had no clear notion of what they wanted to do with it when their goal was achieved. The bigger faction led by Sant Fateh Singh proclaimed that all that remained to be done was the redrawing of boundaries along linguistic lines and the transfer of Chandigarh to the Punjab. The smaller but more vociferous faction led by Master Tara Singh made no secret of the fact that they had used the linguistic argument to gain a state in which the Sikhs would be in a majority and so be able to ensure the preservation of Sikh

36 Figures speak eloquently of the change that took place. In 1971–2 the per capita income of the Punjabis at current prices was Rs 995 (the highest of any State and considerably more than the Indian average of Rs 645). Haryana came next with Rs 829 per capita. Even the Himachali, who had been among the poorest of the country, improved his position and recorded an income of Rs 563 per head per year.

37 Satyapal Dang (b.1923), at village Gojra, District Lyallpur, now in Pakistan; a member of the first Gurnam Singh ministry, in charge of food.

38 Gurnam Singh (1899–1973); born at Narangwal, Dist. Ludhiana. A barrister, he entered politics after his retirement as a judge of the Punjab High Court in 1959. He was killed in an air crash.

traditions and identity. However, even they did not bother to spell out the details. Out of this second faction emerged a yet smaller but even more vociferous group pledged to the establishment of a sovereign, independent Sikh State.[39]

With no clearly defined economic, social or political objectives and no strong loyalties to the parties they belonged to, personal advancement became the chief motivating factor of Punjabi politicians. In the years that followed they indulged in the sordid game of defections and regroupings of political factions known as *partibazi.* First Gian Singh Rarewala, the leader of the Congress party won over Lachhman Singh Gill of Master Tara Singh's group and toppled Gurnam Singh's ministry after it had been in office for a little over eight months (8 March 1967 to 25 November 1967). Gill was Chief Minister for nearly nine months (27 November 1967 to 23 August 1968). Since he belonged to the Master Tara Singh faction he tried to help his mentor gain control of the S.G.P.C., of which he had once been secretary, He charged the Sant group of malpractices and had Fateh Singh's right-hand man, Chanan Singh, arrested. At the same time he sought to gain popular esteem among the Sikhs by having the Official Languages Bill passed by both houses of the State legislature. The act made Punjabi the only language for administration at the district level. Gill boasted that he had done for Punjabi what even Ranjit Singh had been unable to do as Maharajah of the Punjab.

Gill's tenure of office was marked by rowdyism in the legislature (the assembly had to be prorogued by the Governor's ordinance on 11 March 1968). Master Tara Singh's death on 22 November 1967 deprived him of his chief prop; the defections

39 The faction later came to be led by Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan. In the 1962 elections, Kairon backed him as an independent against Gyani Kartar Singh. He fought and won the 1967 elections and became Deputy Speaker. He joined the Akali Party and was for a while Finance Minister in Lachhman Singh Gill's government. After the defeat of Gill's party in the 1969 elections, Chauhan set up the Pheruman Akali Dal and was also Secretary of the Sant Akali Dal. Revisited England, made contacts with foreign embassies and tried to put the Sikh case before the United Nations.

of Congress party members (led by Rarewala) reduced his following to a minority and he was forced to resign. The Punjab came under President's Rule.

For the next five and a half months (13 August 1968 to 17 February 1969), Governor D.C. Pavate ruled the State with the help of two advisers. A mid-term poll in 1969 exposed the factionalism rife in Punjab's political parties. Rarewala's hegemony over the Congress was successfully challenged by Giani Zail Singh, president of the provincial unit. Rarewala resigned from the Congress to rejoin the Akalis.

The Akalis were also divided in their ranks. The now leaderless Master Tara Singh group lost its following in the rural areas and was reduced to a limited following in towns and cities. Recognizing their weakness, the Tara Singh Akalis agreed to fight the elections as junior partners of the Fateh Singh group. Sant Fateh Singh was able to win the support of the Jan Sangh as well as the Communists. He placated them with an unequivocal declaration that, having achieved the Punjabi Suba on the basis of language, he desired no more changes of boundaries and acknowledged Hindi as the national language for India as well as the link language for Punjab.

The elections which took place in February 1969 were a triumph for Sant Fateh Singh. For the first time the Akalis came out as the largest single party in the legislature[40]: of the 104 seats in the assembly they won 43; the Congress 38; the Jan Sangh 8 (its leader Dr Baldev Prakash was defeated); the rest went to the Communists, Socialists and Swatantrites. Gurnam Singh was re-elected leader of the Akali group and invited once again to form the government.

Although Gurnam Singh announced a ten-point programme which included restoration of communal harmony, securing Chandigarh solely for the Punjab, amelioration of the condition of backward classes, electrification of villages, etc. he pursued his vendetta against the Congress and his rivals with greater zeal

40 In a short while Gurnam Singh was able to win over enough Congress MLAs to gain an absolute majority in the House.

than his development plans. Since the Congress party was strong in the urban areas, he postponed the scheduled elections to 47 municipal committees and superseded the Jullundur municipal committee in which the Congress was in power. He had Lachhman Singh Gill arrested and charged with corruption during his short tenure as Chief Minister.[41] One positive step taken by Gurnam Singh was the abolition of the upper house of the Punjab legislature.

While maintaining the public posture of being anti-Congress, Gurnam Singh began to cultivate Congress leaders, His opportunity came during the confrontation between the two rival Congress factions over the election of the President of the Indian Republic in the autumn of 1969. Gurnam Singh pledged Akali support to Mrs Gandhi's candidate, V. V. Giri, who eventually won by a slender majority.

The infighting between the Sant Fateh Singh faction and Master Tara Singh's followers queered the pitch for Gurnam Singh. Tara Singh's followers launched a propaganda campaign against Sant Fateh Singh, accusing him of dishonourable conduct in breaking his vow to fast to death, or immolate himself on 27 December 1966 if Chandigarh was not given to the Punjab. While accusations and counter-accusations were being hurled at each other by the two factions, Darshan Singh Pheruman of the Swatantra Party announced his decision to begin a fast to death on 15 August 1969 in the Central Jail, Amritsar, where he had been lodged three days earlier. Pheruman carried out his pledge and after 74 days of hunger, died on 27 October 1969.[42] At his

41 Gill retaliated by filing an election petition against Gurnam Singh. The issues were settled by the sudden death of Gill on 16 April 1969. Gill was born in 1917 in a Jat Sikh family of Chuhar Chuk, Dist. Ferozepur. Rejoined the Congress in 1937. In 1947 he was imprisoned thrice for nationalist activities from 1962 to 1967 he was deputy leader of the opposition in the Punjab legislature.

42 Darshan Singh Pheruman (1886–1969) was involved in anti-British agitations in Malaya and in India. He spent 15 years in gaol. He was a member of the S.G.P.C. for several years and its General Secretary for two terms. He was member of the Rajva Sabha 1952–64 and joined the Swatantra Party as a founder member in 1959.

funeral a large, angry crowd shouted slogans against Gurnam Singh's government and Sant Fateh Singh.

For a while Gurnam Singh supported Sant Fateh Singh and sought to restore his image as the champion of Sikh interests by vigorously demanding Chandigarh for the Punjab. There was a resurgence of Hindu-Sikh tension; in Haryana, Hindu college students went on a rampage against the Sikhs. Gurnam Singh's break with Sant Fateh Singh came over the latter's demand that he (Gurnam) and all Akali members of the legislature resign their seats. Gurnam Singh refused to oblige. Sant Fateh Singh denounced him and made a desperate bid to win back the Sikh masses. He began another fast on 26 January 1970 and swore that if Chandigarh was not restored to the Punjab, he would take his own life.

Mrs Gandhi stepped in. And once again gave an award announced on 29 January 1970 which she ought to have known was unfair to the Punjab and would become an issue in the years to come. She gave Chandigarh to the Punjab, but unasked for gave a part of Fazilka tehsil and Abohar (both rich cotton growing tracts) to Haryana, along with an outright grant of Rs 10 crores to build itself a new capital. At least 60 out of the 115 villages of this Fazilka-Abohar region had recorded their language as Punjabi and it was not contiguous to Haryana. To get over the difficulty she prescribed that 'a strip of territory of an average width of about one furlong along the inter-state boundary between Punjab and Rajasthan in village Khandukhera of Mukisar tehsil will also be transferred to Haryana.' Thus she injected an alien element in the body politics of Punjab and Haryana which soon became a cancerous growth. Of all the original states of the union it was only Punjab which had to share its capital and have a corridor carved out of its territory.

Both Gurnam Singh and Sant Fateh Singh claimed to be the victors of Chandigarh. Relations between the two came to breaking point. As Fateh Singh's followers began to desert him, Gurnam Singh turned to the Congress for help. The Congressites refused to bail him out and his second tenure as Chief Minister came to an end on 25 March 1970 with the defeat of his ministry.

The Akalis added insult to injury by expelling him from the party.[43]

The Congress party's attempt to take over the administration was frustrated by the Akalis. Prakash Singh Badal[44] collected 54 legislators, lined them up on the lawns of the Governor's house and successfully claimed the right to be the new Chief Minister. On 27 March 1970 he along with another Akali and the leader of the Jan Sangh were administered the oath of office.[45]

The new chief minister had a full-time job keeping his supporters and possible defectors happy. And when that failed he tried to avoid legislative procedures and instead rule by ordinances. The governor refused to oblige.

The parliamentary elections in March 1971 exploded the myth of the Sikh masses' total commitment to the Akali party. Of the 13 parliamentary seats from the Punjab, 10 were captured by the Congress and 1 by the Communists: the Akalis won only one. The debacle caused dissension and defection from the ranks of Badal's supporters. The Jan Sangh on one side and the extremist Akalis (led by Gurnam Singh) on the other made his position untenable. After 15 months of wheeling-dealing and manoeuvering, Badal threw in the sponge and resigned on 13 June 1971.

Once more Punjab came under President's Rule. The Governor and his advisors proceeded to restore normalcy to the State. Amongst the measures introduced by the Badal ministry to gain

43 Gurnam Singh was nominated High Commissioner to Australia. A few days after taking charge he was killed in an air crash near Delhi on 31 May 1973. See also *My Days as Governor* by D. C. Pavate, p. 138.

44 Prakash Singh Badal (b. 1927), of village Abulkhurana, (District Ferozepur) a wealthy land owner. He joined the Akali Dal and was member of the S.G.P.C, or many years. He was elected to the Punjab Assembly in 1957 and again in 1969 and became a minister. He was thrice Chief Minister of Punjab and for a short-term member of the Lok Sabha. He was arrested many times in the Akali agitation and during the emergency. He was elected to the Punjab legislature in 1957 as a Congress candidate, and, before becoming Chief Minister, was arrested for participating in the Suba agitation.

45 *My Days as Governor* by D.C. Pavate, p. 139.

the support of the richer peasantry was the abolition of land revenue. It caused a loss of Rs 3.5 crores per year to the State. The government exempted farmers holding less than 5 acres of land but reimposed the levy on those holding more. Arbitrary transfers of village teachers made by the Badal ministry were cancelled, violent student and Communist (Naxalite) activity and large-scale smuggling of contraband like hashish, opium, liquor and gold from Pakistan were checked.

The opposition, which had many scores to settle with Badal and his Akali colleagues, alleged improprieties. A commission of enquiry was set up under Durga Shankar Dave, a retired Chief Justice of Rajasthan, to examine them. Badal countered the move by demanding that the commission should also examine the irregularities committed by the Gurnam Singh ministry.

While these charges and counter-charges were being traded against each other, tension between India and Pakistan once more exploded into a war. The Indian army in Bengal, commanded by Lt. General Jagjit Singh Arora, aided by Bangladesh's Mukti Bahini guerrillas, made short work of the Pakistanis in the east. The Punjab had to bear the brunt of the Pakistani assault. Bloody battles were fought around Fazilka, Hussainiwala, Dera Baba Nanak and Shakargarh. The massive steel bridge over the Sutlej at Hussainiwala had to be blown up to prevent Pakistani tanks from crossing over.

The fourteen-day war ended in a resounding Indian victory. Most of the credit went to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. She was awarded the Bharat Ratna and her popularity among the masses rose to an unprecedented height. She sensed that in the mood of euphoria that had swept over the country and the enormous prestige it had brought her, she could sweep the opposition parties off the political map of India.

The post-war situation in the Punjab was no different than it was in the rest of the country. The only opposition party that really mattered was the Akali Dal. The Akalis were not only split into warring factions but neither the larger Sant Fateh Singh group nor the smaller Master Tara Singh group had earned any credit by the way they had run the government or behaved

towards each other. Master Tara Singh was dead; Sant Fateh Singh discredited. The Sant's attempt to whip up Sikh sentiment over the government's control of the gurdwaras in Delhi (the Akali management had been found guilty of defalcation of large sums of money) did not arouse the response he expected. The Sant was arrested (15 August 1972) and the agitation resulted in another 9000 Akalis going to gaol. It partially re-established the Sant as the leader of the Akalis but did not enhance his credibility among the masses.

The general election in March 1972 shattered the Akali political machine: the Congress won 66 seats; their Communist allies another 10; the Marxists got 1; Independents 3. The Akalis got only 24 out of the total of 104. The Congress could now afford to dispense with the Akalis. On 17 March 1972 Giani Zail Singh[46] was sworn in as Chief Minister.

Giani Zail Singh's five-year tenure as Chief Minister of the Punjab was perhaps the most stable in the history of the State. Although a Ramgarhia in a preponderantly Jat State, he was able to play Jat factions against each other. He enjoyed the confidence of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and was able to run the State smoothly, even during the years she imposed the emergency despite the passive resistance movement sustained by the Akalis throughout the period. However, his chief contribution was the determined effort he made to break the hegemony of the Akali Dal over Sikh politics. He sensed that as long as the Akalis controlled the SGPC, had access to its funds and patronage in the appointments of thousands of Sewadars, Gran Granthis this and Ragis, and in the management of the schools, colleges

46 Giani Zail Singh, born in 1916 in village Sandhwan (Faridkot) is a Ramgarhia. He founded the Praja Mandal in the erstwhile state of Faridkot and was imprisoned for five years for leading agitations against the Raja. He was minister in the PEPSU government, president of the PEPSU Pradesh Congress Committee and later president, Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee. He was Member of the Rajya Sabha 1956–62 and elected to the Punjab Assembly in 1970. He was Chief Minister of the Punjab during 1972–7. Home Minister in the Central Government in 1980–2, and President of the Republic, 1982–7.

and hospitals run by it, they would remain the most formidable force in the State's politics. He took it upon himself to wrest control of the SGPC from the Akalis. The only way he knew of going about doing so was to prove to the masses that, though a Congressman committed to secularism, he knew more about Sikh religion and was a better Sikh than any of the Akali leaders. Paradoxically, it was during his tenure as Chief Minister that, while the State achieved unprecedented prosperity, it also witnessed the birth of Sikh religious fundamentalism; this was to change the entire basis of the relationship between the Sikhs and their fellow countrymen belonging to other faiths, and would prevent the Punjab from becoming even more prosperous.

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19. Prosperity and Religious Fundamentalism

The return to traditional religion with greater emphasis on ritual than on ethics has become a world-wide phenomenon, varying in its manifestations according to conditions prevailing in the particular region. Christianity has its born-again Christians believing in the gospel as the word of God; Islam its Wahabism and Khomeinism that emphasize the letter more than the spirit of the Koran and the Hadith. India did not remain immune from this resurgence of religious fundamentalism. The overwhelming majority of the population (85 per cent) which subscribed to one or other form of Hinduism felt that, with political independence, the time had come to reassert its religious and cultural identity. India's new rulers who chose to make it a secular state (which in Indian nomenclature does not mean non-religious but one which accords equal respect to all religions) nevertheless fully supported the renaissance of Hinduism. It was like the stone idol of the multi-armed goddess Durga becoming animated and wielding all the weapons she had in her many hands. There was a revival of Sanskrit and the study of ancient religious texts; *prachirini sabhas* (propaganda organizations) extolling the philosophy of Vedanta sprang up in towns and cities; Swamis, Sants, Avtars and other varieties of godmen emerged from their ashrams to take the spiritual message of Hinduism to the materialistic West; Yoga was rediscovered as

the supreme form of physical exercise as well as a means of communion with God; there was a revival of the indigenous form of medicine, Ayurveda; old dilapidated temples were renovated, new ones built. Government-controlled media, All India Radio and Doordarshan, devoted a substantial part of their time to bhajans and religious discourses and re-enacting plays from Hindu mythology. These lent fresh vigour to paramilitary Hindu organizations like the RSS and the Shiva Sena.

This development made the minority communities, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs, apprehensive of their future. Islam and Christianity, which had been stigmatized as non-Indian religions receiving sustenance from their foreign co-religionists, became equally aggressive in their postures. The Sikhs were in an invidious position. They formed a miniscule minority of under 2 per cent of the population. Most Hindus regarded them as a militant wing of Hinduism, differentiated only by the external emblems of the Khalsa, the uncut hair and beards of their men. Hinduism did not mean to challenge Sikhism or even its Khalsa manifestation. The challenge to Sikhism came from the winds of modernism and prosperity which swept over the community with the Green Revolution. An ever-growing number of young Sikhs began to question the need of wearing long hair and beards and looked upon them as archaic relics of the past. The incidence of apostasy among the more educated and well-to-do reached alarming proportions. To many it seemed that within the foreseeable future the community would be reabsorbed into Hinduism and become like the Jains or the Buddhists, a branch of Hindus believing in Sikhism. The development caused anguish in the hearts of the orthodox Khalsa; it also did not suit politicians to whom Sikh separateness assured political survival.

A cursory look at the Punjab after its division, and the disposition of the Sikhs following their exodus from what had been the homeland of the more prosperous half of the community, will show how the ground was prepared for sowing the seeds of separatism and the revival of orthodoxy.

The immigration of land-based Sikhs, mainly consisting of Jats, artisans and lower caste land labourers halted along

specified borders in east Punjab; the spillover was accommodated in the neighbouring Ganganagar district of Rajasthan and the Terai region of Uttar Pradesh. Sikh trading communities, like their Hindu counterparts, were left to fend for themselves in towns and cities where they sensed reasonable prospects for business. In this dispersal the land-based section of the community was geographically consolidated whereas the trading classes were divided and scattered. Jat Sikhs, who had never held the non-agriculturist communities in much esteem, began to treat them with unconcealed contempt as second-class Sikhs. Pratap Singh Kairon publicly referred to them as *Bhapas* (brothers), a pejorative term for Sikhs of Brahmin, Khatri or Arora extraction. This despite the fact that all the Sikhs' ten gurus were Khatris, as was Banda Singh Bairagi. Leadership of the Punjabi Sikh community passed out of the trading community to the land-based—and amongst the land-based it came firmly in the grip of those who had been there before the partition rather than the emigrants who were dispersed in different districts. The process saw the gradual diminution of the importance of the Majha and Doaba, and the rise of the Malwa Sikhs of Ludhiana, Patiala, Faridkote and Ferozepur. Post-independence Sikh leaders of different political parties were Malwa Jats; the Akali Dal and the SGPC also came under their control. Sikh urban communities were marginalized; their main centre of collective activity shifted to Delhi.

The Green Revolution

Behind the facade of political wranglings began a silent revolution. Its epicentre was the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) at Ludhiana, which was set up in 1962. It was here that the visiting Norwegian-American agro-scientist, Norman Borlaug,[1] and his team of Indian scientists evolved new strains of Mexican

1 Norman Ernest Borlaug (b.1914) microbiologist of the University of Minnesota spent 14 years in Mexico at the Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre and several other universities and institutions before he came to Ludhiana. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1970.

dwarf wheat and passed the seed on to the farming community. With the new variety of seed came modern methods of farming: the use of tractors, threshers and harvesters, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Punjab, which was already well provided with canal irrigation, dug a record number of tube-wells energized by diesel or electricity produced by the Bhakra Nangal hydro-run turbines. Punjab's agricultural output began a spectacular upward climb in the mid-1960s. The yield per acre doubled and then trebled. Bumper harvests of wheat were followed by bumper harvests of rice from paddy seed developed in Taiwan. There were similar increases in sugarcane and cotton. This came to be known as the Green Revolution. Its chief propogators as well as beneficiaries were Sikh farmers who owned more than 90 per cent of Punjab's land under cultivation.

Ludhiana had been well chosen as the launching pad for the agricultural revolution. It was in the most fertile region of the Indo-Gangetic plain, with easily tappable and replenishable supplies of sub-soil water. Extensive consolidation of holdings had been completed by 1961. Although densely populated (773 persons per square mile), more than 65 per cent of the population was employed in non-agricultural pursuits. The town, manufacturing varieties of hosiery, cycles, motor spare parts and machine tools, had earned the reputation of being the 'small-scale industrial capital of India'. Rural areas were well serviced by all-weather roads connecting them to the town's industrial complex. The pressure of population on the land was comparatively light, as over half (55 per cent) of the cultivable area was owned by farmers owning more than twenty acres each. They formed 37 per cent of the farming population. Another 43 per cent owned between ten to twenty acres each. Only 20 per cent had holdings of less than ten acres. Ludhiana's rural population had the highest rate of literacy (42 per cent) of any district in the Punjab. Above all, the peasantry was almost entirely Sikh and forward looking.

In 1965, the Ministry of Agriculture selected Ludhiana as one of the districts to try out its Intensive Agricultural Areas Programme (IAAP). The Ford Foundation had earlier prepared a

complete 'package of practices' which included easier credit facilities, the use of chemical fertilizers, new varieties of seeds, pesticides, price incentives and marketing facilities. All these were put into operation under the IAAP in Ludhiana. Although the overall results were bountiful, they widened the economic gulf between the agricultural classes. The larger landholders, who had easier access to credit were able to sink more tube-wells, buy tractors, use modern inputs and thus treble the output from their lands. Medium-sized holders with lesser means were barely able to break even. Those who owned less than ten acres found farming economically unviable and came under pressure to sell their lands. In the initial stages of the Green Revolution, land labourers were able to extract higher wages from the landlords. The traditional relationship 'that had existed between the two over the centuries, by which labourers had received a proportion of the harvest (usually one-twentieth), gave way to hard bargaining and payments in cash. As farming got more mechanized, landowners began to dispense with farm hands: what had been for generations a familial patron-client association turned into an adversarial one. Rich landlords became richer, the marginal became poor; and the landless unwanted on the land. It had been assumed that, while mechanization would displace labour, it would open up employment opportunities for the landless as tractor drivers and mechanics. This was not the way it turned out, as most farmers preferred to drive and look after their own vehicles. The number of landless unemployed increased. Even ancillary profit-yielding pursuits like dairying and poultry-breeding were collared by the rich. The seeds of class conflict were sown at the same time as those of prosperity.

In 1969, the Home Ministry published a report, *The Causes and Nature of the Current Agrarian Conflict*, which recorded that over 80 per cent of the agitations were led by the landless against landowners. In her study on the Green Revolution, Frankel alludes to the 'growing evidence that as economic disparities increase so does the likelihood that social discontent will be transformed into political violence by radical parties interested

in launching a class struggle movement in the countryside.'[2] Referring specifically to Ludhiana she writes: 'where the majority of cultivators have economic holdings of 15–20 acres or more and have accumulated surpluses from savings or raised capital through loans, for investing in minor irrigation and improved equipment, the benefits of technology have been most widely, albeit still unevenly, shared. Probably only the bottom 20 per cent of all farmers, that is, those holding 10 acres or less, have experienced a serious relative deterioration of their economic position for want of sufficient capital in indivisible inputs (especially minor irrigation works) necessary for the profitable adoption of new techniques.'[3]

Simultaneous with the Green Revolution came the opening up of the Middle East and Western countries to emigrants. Since the turn of the century, small Sikh communities had existed in Canada, the United States, England, Australia and countries on the East African coast. Taking advantage of their status as citizens of the Commonwealth, thousands of Sikhs emigrated to England, Canada and Australia and acquired citizenships. Others, who could, went to the United States. Many more found employment in the Arab countries of the Gulf and the Middle East. The remittances they sent home helped their families to wipe out old debts, buy more land from their less fortunate neighbours and build new houses. They sent their children to schools and colleges. They acquired radios and TV sets, telephones and audiovisual equipment, refrigerators and air conditioners. Their boys learned to ride motorcycles. The well-to-do Sikh farmer never had it so good as he did in the 1960s and the 1970s. With higher standards of living, their expectations of the future were correspondingly raised. In short, the Green Revolution brought in its wake a revolution of rising expectations.

There are other aspects of the Green Revolution which should be noted. The price of land shot up well beyond its productive

2 Francine R. Frankel. *India's Green Revolution: Economic Gains and Political Costs* (Princeton. N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 10.

3 Ibid., pp. 191–2.

capacity. Land owning has always been the most important status symbol in agricultural communities. Whatever the farmers got from remittances from foreign countries or saved from wages, or from plying taxis or trucks, they ploughed back into their top priority, the acquisition of more land. While the price of an acre rose to above a lakh of rupees, its short-term yield remained well below what could have been earned as interest from a bank or investment in a business venture. Only what was left over went into small-scale industries in the neighbourhood. Thus, the scope of economic expansion remained within narrow confines.

At the same time, the sons of farmers who had been to college were loath to work on the land and preferred softer white collar jobs in the government or private enterprises. They preferred to remain idle blowing away the newly acquired wealth. For the hard work, well-to-do Sikh farmers turned to poor Hindu labourers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar who began to come to the Punjab in the thousands at every harvest season. The number of educated Sikhs started going up. While at the time of Independence there was only one university with a handful of colleges in what later became the Punjabi Suba, by the 1970s there were four universities and 150 colleges, each turning out graduates by the hundreds every year.

With unprecedented prosperity came the evils that prosperity engenders. The consumption of alcohol and drugs like opium, hashish and heroin increased. Young Sikhs began to 'modernize' themselves by trimming or shaving their beards; many took to smoking in contravention of a hallowed religious taboo. Pornographic films and literature brought in by returning emigrants replaced religious texts and books of learning. Video cassettes and cinemas drew larger audiences than village gurdwaras or meetings of village councils.

The halcyon years of the Green Revolution and foreign remittances did not last very long. After the orgy of prosperity came the hangover of overindulgence. The output from the land reached its optimum plateau stage, and not much more could be extracted from it through new seeds, more fecund fertilizers and

lethal pesticides. With each generation land holdings were divided and sub-divided between sons and daughters, till they became uneconomical and had to be sold to richer farmers. As foreign countries began to impose restrictions on visas and work permits, remittances began to decline. Young Sikhs coming out of schools and colleges found that there was not enough for them to do on the land; they could not go abroad and there was hardly any industry in the Punjab that could absorb them. As the number of landless increased, so also the numbers of educated unemployed began to multiply.[4] They lent one ear to the Marxists, the other to preachers of religion. In the first round religion scored over Marxism because it was able to project itself as a purveyor of higher morality and ethics. In the rounds to follow, the outcome may be quite different.

The Sikh religious revival coincided with the Green Revolution. The man who got it going was Giani Zail Singh. His motives were primarily political, viz., to oust the Akali Dal from the SGPC and minimize its importance in the State's politics. The Akalis had monopolized the preservation and propagation of Sikhism. Zail Singh, as Chief Minister of the State (1972–7) wanted to prove that, though he was a member of the Congress party committed to secularism, he was a more devout Sikh than the Akalis. The movement to assert Sikh identity had been

4 The Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, published in 1987 a study of 'Rural Employment' in the Punjab in the years 1984–5. Its findings were most revealing: (i) that 35.55 per cent of the educated in 1984 and 1985 were unemployed; (ii) of the aspirants for jobs 16.74 per cent of the educated spent more than four years and 40.50 per cent more than two years in search of employment; (iii) the average Punjabi worker was employed only 323 days, in the year; (iv) subsidiary occupations were available for only 93 days in the year; (v) 38 per cent of the workers worked less than 200 hours per month, that is, only about five hours per day.

It concluded that 'the acutest problem of unemployment was found in the age group between 15–30 years. In the case of educated persons, the highest underemployment recorded was in the matriculate category of educated persons where about 50 per cent worked for less than 200 hours per month. 8.48 per cent were almost unemployed as their actual employment was about two hours per day.'

started in 1967 and 1969 when the tricentenary and quincentary celebrations of Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Nanak were organized on an international scale. The Giani gave a further fillip to the movement by organizing in 1973 the centenary celebrations of the founding of the Singh Sabha, and in 1975 by tricentary celebrations of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. These were followed by preparations for the bicentenary celebrations of the birth anniversary of Maharajah Ranjit Singh. Giani Zail Singh was also responsible for the founding of the Guru Nanak Dev University in Amritsar. Several state-run hospitals were renamed after the gurus. He organized *Kīrtan Durbars* all over the State; public functions began with an *ardās* (invocations); the 400 km of road running from Anandpur to Patiala linking many historic gurdwaras was renamed Guru Gobind Singh Marg; a string of horses said to be descendants of the Guru's stallion were led down this road; villagers reverently collected their droppings to take home; a new township, Shaheed Baba Ajit Singh Nagar, was named after one of the Guru's martyred sons. Giani Zail Singh displayed even greater religious fervour when the Akalis wrested power from him and formed a government in collaboration with the Janata Party. He began to pay homage to Sikh holy men and passed the baton of religious revival on to them.

Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale

The institution of the *sant* (saint) is widespread. To their *deras* (hospices) come people seeking solace and advice on spiritual as well as temporal problems. Many sants have earned reknown for piety and their deras are handsomely endowed by grateful patrons. In recent years one that rose to pre-eminence was the Damdami Taksal. In 1906 the *taksal* was shifted to the village of Bhinder (in Moga tehsil), after which its incumbents were known as Bhindranwale.[5]

5 Damdama Sahib at Talwandi Sabo in Patiala was the place where the last Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh, rested awhile eluding his pursuers (hence *Dam*, resting or gaining a second wind) and completed the final

The Damdami Taksal at Bhinder gained prestige in the time of Sant Gurbachan Singh. When Gurbachan Singh died his succession was disputed between two followers, Mohan Singh, and Kartar Singh. Mohan Singh, supported by an Akali Minister, managed to take over the Bhinder taksal. His rival, Kartar Singh, set up his own taksal at Chowk Mehta near Amritsar. When Kartar Singh was killed in a car accident in August 1971, the congregation by consensus elected Jarnail Singh, who had been Kartar Singh's favourite disciple, to be his successor in preference to his son, Amrik Singh. Instead of resenting the choice, Amrik Singh became a confidante and collaborator of Jarnail Singh and, later, head of the All-India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF).

Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, born in the village of Rode in Faridkote district in 1947, was the youngest son in a family of eight children. His father was originally a poor Brar Jat peasant farmer, Joginder Singh. It was poverty as much as religious fervour that persuaded Joginder Singh to donate his son, then only seven years old, to the Damdami Taksal at Chowk Mehta. Jarnail Singh received little formal education apart from learning passages of the Granth by rote and acquiring an elementary knowledge of Sikh mythology. These enabled him to establish a rapport with the largely illiterate and semi-literate Sikh peasantry which understood the language he spoke. To start with, his message was simple: return to the spartan traditions of the Khalsa Panth initiated by Guru Gobind Singh and renounce the evils of modernism. He toured villages exhorting people to give up drinking, taking drugs, smoking and dishonouring emblems of the faith (unshorn hair and beards) by cutting them. Those who agreed to do so he baptized (or rebaptized) in the presence of large congregations. His strongest supporters at the time were women and children who had suffered at the hands of their drunken or doped fathers, husbands or brothers. Bhindranwale's *amrit prachār* (propaganda through the nectar of baptism) was

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recension of the Holy Granth. Its first head was Baba Deep Singh who was killed after slaying one of the desecrators of the Harimandir. His shrine is on the southern *Parikarma* of the Golden Temple.

a resounding success. Adults in their thousands took oaths in public to abjure liquor, tobacco and drugs and were baptized. Video cassettes showing blue films, and cinema houses lost out to the village gurdwara. Men not only saved money they had earlier squandered in self-indulgence, but now worked longer hours on their lands and raised better crops. They had much to be grateful for to Jarnail Singh who came to be revered by them as Baba Sant Jarnail Singhji Khalsa Bhindranwale.

Bhindranwale expanded his role from that of a preacher to a settler of disputes. Peasants who had wasted years in litigation and paying lawyers, came to him for help. The parents of women pestered for dowries sought his intervention. His retinue of armed followers ensured that his verdicts were carried out. What won him the greatest acclaim was that, unlike other preachers who paid lip service to the Sikh ideal of a casteless society, Bhindranwale made no distinction between higher and lower castes and treated the lowest castes of Sikh untouchables as members of his fraternity.

Bhindranwale's reputation grew. He was tall, wiry, long-nosed, with deep-set, suspicious eyes. He sported a beard that flowed down to his navel and he added to his image by wearing across his chest a bandolier charged with bullets, with pistols in holsters on either side of his hips. In his hand he carried a silver arrow of the kind carried by Guru Gobind Singh and Maharajah Ranjit Singh. He exhorted Sikhs to be *shastradhāri* (bearers of arms) which, in addition to the traditional kirpan, now included modern weapons like pistols, revolvers and rifles; and instead of the horses their ancestors had ridden, to ride motorcycles. He was no great orator, but his rough, rustic vocabulary was full of disparaging references to Hindus as *dhotian wale* (dhoti wearers), *topian wale* (cap wearers); and references to Mrs Gandhi as *Bahmani* (Brahmin woman) and *Panditan di dhee* (daughter of Pandits) went down well with his audiences. He provided excellent copy for journalists. He acquired the charisma of an acerbic-tongued saint-warrior.

Sikh fundamentalism, of which Bhindranwale became the messiah, had a lot in common with similar movements in other

religious communities. As elsewhere, so in the Punjab of the 1960s and 1970s, there was the apprehension of an uncertain future gnawing into the vitals of the rootless section of Sikh rural classes for which there seemed to be no rational panaceas. In the turbulent sea of contending tides, Bhindranwale stood as a lighthouse built on the solid rock of faith sending out powerful beams of light piercing the engulfing darkness. He was not bothered with subtle points of theology; he had his list of do's and don't's clearly set out in bold letters. He took those passages from the sacred texts which suited his purpose and ignored or glossed over others that did not. He well understood that hate was a stronger passion than love: his list of hates was even more clearly and boldly spelt out. On top of the hate-list were apostates (*patits*) who dishonoured emblems of the Khalsa by cutting their long hair and beards, smoked, drank liquor or took drugs. However, these patits could be redeemed if they agreed to mend their ways, and accept baptism. Next on the list were Sant Nirankaris who had gained a sizeable following among the Sikhs. They had committed the cardinal sin of recognizing a living human being as their guru when it was an article of Sikh faith that only the holy book, the Granth Sahib, was the 'living' embodiment of the ten gurus. The Sant Nirankaris had also fabricated their own sacred texts, *Yug Purush* and *Avtar Bani.* They were therefore beyond forgiveness or redemption and had to be liquidated. Finally, there were the Hindus—uncomfortably close to the Sikhs, and far too many to be liquidated. The only way of dealing with them was to treat them with contempt as an effeminate, non-martial race and a lesser breed without the law. Had not the tenth guru, Gobind Singh, proclaimed that one Sikh was equal to a *sava lakh* (one and a quarter million) and a *fauj*—a one-man army? So spoke Bhindranwale: one Sikh could easily reckon with thirty-five Hindus.[6]

6 'It comes to 35 and not even 100. Divide 66 crores, then each Sikh gets only 35 Hindus, not even the 36th. How do you say you are weak?' Taped recording speech with the author; also quoted in *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation,* p. 163.

To Bhindranwale modernity was evil; the Sikhs must return to the simple ways of their warrior forefathers. They must look like them: wear their beards loose and not rolled up and tied under their chins; they must wear long shirts, below knee-length breeches (*kucchas*) covering their shins. Likewise, Sikh women should not drape themselves in sarees which were Hindu, but in salwar-kameez. (baggy trousers and long shirts) which are Punjabi, nor wear bindis (dots) on their foreheads. His newborn Khalsa were to be-god-like (*saabat soorat gur Sikh*), while the rest of the world was ungodly—and woe to the ungodly! The newborn Khalsa were the Gurus' storm troopers who would trample their foes under their bare feet like so much vermin. It was a heady brew that Bhindranwale served to simple-minded Sikh peasants.

It was after politicians discovered Bhindranwale's enormous popularity and began to flatter him with their attentions that hubris entered the soul of the rustic preacher and he became even more arrogant and overbearing, convinced of his invincibility.

Among the earliest to discover Bhindranwale's potential as a pawn in the game of party politics was Giani Zail Singh, his arch rival Darbara Singh, and through them, Mrs Gandhi's politically ambitious son, Sanjay Gandhi. The Akali-Janata government under Prakash Singh Badal had instituted an enquiry against Zail Singh for misuse of authority while he was Chief Minister. As President of the Provincial Congress Committee he aimed at negating the findings of the commission against him, ousting the Akali government from power and breaking the Akali Dal's stranglehold over the SGPC. Both Zail Singh and Darbara Singh courted Bhindranwale and encouraged him to put up candidates, including Amrik Singh, against the Akalis in the SGPC elections of 1979. Of the forty candidates Bhindranwale put up, all but four were defeated. It was evident that whatever his popularity as a preacher, till then he did not count for very much in Sikh politics. But his political potential had been spotted by both the Congress and the Akali parties. With these formidable political forces vying

with each other to win him over to their side, Bhindranwale could not lose.[7]

Until 13 April 1978, few people outside Punjab had heard of Bhindranwale. From that day till his death six years later (June 1984), his name was rarely absent from the front pages of the national newspapers. He had pronounced damnation on the breakaway Sant Nirankari subsect,[8] then under the guruship of Baba Gurbachan Singh. Pleas to the government to proscribe their two religious texts, *Yug Punish* and *Avtar Bani,* had been of no avail. Bhindranwale took it upon himself to exterminate them. When they announced that they would hold their annual convention on Punjab's New Year's day, the first day of Baisakh (13 April) at Amritsar, Bhindranwale proclaimed that he would not allow the meeting to take place. The Akali-Janata government under Badal neither forbade the Sant Nirankari meeting nor took pre-emptive action against Bhindranwale to prevent his disrupting it. A procession led by the Akhand Kirtani Jatha and Bhindranwale's followers was allowed to march from the Golden Temple through the main bazars of the city to the venue of the Sant Nirankari convention. The Sant Nirankaris had prepared themselves for trouble. In the clash of arms that ensued, seventeen men, mostly belonging to the Akhand Kirtani

7 According to Kuldip Nayar, Sanjay Gandhi, Mrs Gandhi's younger son who was actively engaged in political manoeuvering, had approved of Zail Singh's choice of Bhindranwale as the more aggressive of the two sants suggested to him to be put up against the Akalis. The other did not look a 'courageous type', Sanjay Gandhi's friend Kamal Nath, MP, told Nayar. 'We would give him (Bhindranwale) money off and on,' he added (*Tragedy of Punjab,* p. 31). Bhindranwale also supported Congress candidates like Gurdial Singh Dhillon, R. I. Bhatia and Mrs Bhinder, wife of the Punjab commissioner of police in their election campaigns.

8 This sub-sect, led by one Buta Singh had broken away from its parent body and described itself as Sant Nirankaris. They gained a larger following than the parent body. Buta Singh was succeeded by Avtar Singh. On Avtar Singh's death in 1963, his son Gurbachan Singh was installed as Guru. After his murder in 1980, his son Hardev Singh became head of (he sect. On 10 June 1978 an order of excommunication was pronounced on the Sant Nirankaris from the Akal Takht.

Jatha, including one Fauja Singh, were killed. Bhindranwale had stayed behind in the Golden Temple. Fauja Singh's widow, Amarjeet Kaur, accused Bhindranwale of cowardice. However, his name was amongst those suspected by the police of provoking the clash. In the trial that followed, all Sant Nirankaris, including Baba Gurbachan Singh, were acquitted on the grounds that they had acted in self-defence.

Bhindranwale began to openly espouse the cult of violence. On 24 April 1980, Baba Gurbachan Singh Nirankari and his bodyguard were gunned down at their headquarters in Delhi. The killers escaped. The Central Bureau of Investigation which lodged the first information report named twenty persons, many of them followers of Bhindranwale, and accused Bhindranwale of 'hatching the conspiracy for murder'. Giani Zail Singh, who was then Home Minister in the central government, refuted the police version of Bhindranwale's involvement; Darbara Singh, then Chief Minister of Punjab, also did not find it necessary to proceed against him.[9]

A year later (9 September 1981) Lala Jagat Narain, proprietor of the *Hind Samachar* group of papers, including the new *Jugbani* in Gurmukhi published from Jullundur, was gunned down

9 Arun Shourie, a distinguished journalist and later chief editor of the *Indian Express* wrote in the issue of 10 July 1981 'though the CBI, has solved the murder case of the Nirankari guru, Baba Gurbachan Singh, and his aide last year, it is almost certain that the killers will never be arrested because they are alleged to be in the protection of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, in the Amritsar district of Punjab. Besides, the State police is not prepared to involve itself in the case by arresting the culprits.'

'Repeated pleas by the Lt. Governor of Delhi to the Punjab Chief Minister, Darbara Singh, and the letters written by the director of the C.B.I, to the Punjab government for help have been of no avail. The present Lt. Governor of Delhi, Mr S. L. Khurana, has again written to the Punjab Chief Minister, pleading for the arrest of the suspects. The director of the C.B.I, also wrote to the State government about ten days ago urging it to help the C.B.I, by arresting the culprits and taking away their arms. But the State government has not even acknowledged the letter. The C.B.I, has almost completed the investigations and 11 persons who are suspected in this case have been declared as proclaimed offenders...' Quoted in *Illustrated Weekly of India*, 17–23 June 1984, p. 11.

on the Grand Trunk Road. As secretary of the Congress party in Punjab he had exhorted Punjabi Hindus to declare Hindi as their mother tongue, written in favour of the Sant Nirankaris and criticized the Akali and Congress governments for their pussilanimity in dealing with Bhindranwale. The first information report had Bhindranwale's name among the list of suspects. Instead of arresting him, Chief Minister Darbara Singh announced over All India Radio that warrants for his arrest had been issued. At that time Bhindranwale happened to be in the village of Chand Kalan in Haryana. The Haryana police did not think it was their business to arrest him. His entourage, led by a police car, drove leisurely from Haryana through the Punjab, taking all of seven days to cover 300 km to their headquarters at Chowk Mehta. Bhindranwale himself announced the day, time and place when he would make himself available to the Punjab police. This was on 20 September 1981 and before a vast concourse of admirers, which included Sant Longowal, Tohra and Jathedar Santokh Singh of Delhi. His followers clashed with the police; seventeen men were killed. Instead of putting Bhindranwale in a police lockup, the State government lodged him in a Circuit House meant for ministers of government and senior bureaucrats. On the Akali leaders' insistence, he was set at liberty a few days later on 15 October. This could not have been done without the intercession of the Home Minister, Zail Singh, after he had got the sanction of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Bhindranwale emerged as a hero. He denied complicity in the murders of Baba Gurbachan Singh and Lala Jagat Narain but expressed enthusiastic approval of their stayings. 'Whosoever performed these great feats deserves to be honoured by the Akal Takht,' he announced publicly. 'If these killers came to me, I would have them weighed in gold.' On 9 November 1981 an explosion took place in the Chowk Mehta gurdwara in which three inmates lost their lives. For three hours Bhindranwale refused to let the police enter the premises and then allowed in only officers he approved of.

Home Minister Zail Singh accused Chief Minister Darbara Singh of inaction. On 22 December 1981 Jathedar Santokh

Singh of Delhi was murdered by a rival. At his obsequial ceremonies Bhindranwale was present. Also present were Giani Zail Singh, Minister Buta Singh and Rajiv Gandhi. A few months later (March 1982) Bhindranwale, with truck loads of armed followers, toured several cities of India, including New Delhi. It was Darbara Singh's turn to accuse Zail Singh of deliberately refusing to apprehend Bhindranwale and disarm his followers, most of whom carried firearms without licences.

It was not till after the middle of the following year that the central government realized that it could not manipulate Bhindranwale and instructed Darbara Singh, Chief Minister of the Punjab, to take decisive action against him. By then Bhindranwale had added Hindu-baiting to his other activities. Heads of cows were thrown in Hindu temples and idols damaged. In return, Hindus desecrated Sikh gurdwaras by throwing cigarettes in their courtyards, burning copies of the Granth and destroying a portrait of Guru Ram Das and a replica of the Golden Temple placed at Amritsar railway station. Bhindranwale organized a large demonstration demanding a ban on the sale of tobacco in Amritsar. Local Hindus retaliated by taking out a procession chanting slogans like *cigarette, beedie peeyengay: hum shaan say jeeyengey*—'we will smoke cigarettes and beedies; we will live a grand life.' Bhindranwale discovered that fomenting hatred between the two communities was the easier method of preserving the Sikhs' separate identity from the Hindu than *amrit prachār*. He became even more offensive in his references to the Hindus. He also sensed that by now both Zail Singh and Darbara Singh were eager to disown him and prove their loyalty to the government by advocating that stronger measures be taken against him. He denounced them as 'Indira's touts—these Sikhs fill their stomachs by licking the dust off Indira's *chappals*.'[10]

The arrests on 19 July 1982 of his close associates Amrik Singh and Thara Singh on charges of attempted murder, left no doubt in Bhindranwale's mind that it would not be long before

10 30 April 1983, p. 21.

the police came for him.[11] He moved out from Chowk Mehta to the Golden Temple. The Akalis, whose *nahar roko* (stop the canal) agitation at Patti in Patiala was not going too well, welcomed him and put him up at Guru Nanak Nivas, adjacent to the offices of the SGPC in the Temple complex. They also agreed to include the release of Amrik Singh and Thara Singh among their demands. Bhindranwale accepted Sant Longowal as dictator of the *Dharam Yudh* (battle for righteousness) launched on 4 August 1982.

Bhindranwale's arrival in the Golden Temple put zest in the flagging Akali *morcha* (see the next chapter for more details). He had never subscribed to Gandhian methods of protest but willingly lent his name to them without abjuring the path of violence. The Akalis, on the other hand, displayed an ambivalence unworthy of the descendants of men and women who had won heroic battles to gain possession of their gurdwaras by exemplary displays of the efficacy of passive resistance. The Dharam Yudh volunteers suffered little inconvenience, apart from being kept in jail for a few months or days (often a few hours); their leaders kept silent over the acts of brigandage perpetrated by Bhindranwale's supporters. 'He is our *danda* (stave) with which to beat the government,'[12] said Sant Longowal. The danda fell indiscriminately on the heads of people who Bhindranwale disapproved of. A few days after he had taken residence in the Temple complex, an attempt was made on the life of Chief Minister Darbara Singh (22–3 July 1982); on 4 August 1982 an Indian Airlines plane with 126 passengers aboard was hijacked to Pakistan. It was not allowed to land and came back to Amritsar where the hijackers gave themselves up. A fortnight later (August 20) another plane was hijacked. It was refused permission to land at Lahore and the hijacker was shot dead when it finally landed. The same day another attempt was made on the life of the chief minister; he escaped unhurt, but eighteen others, including his education minister, were injured.

11 Amrik Singh and Thara Singh were subsequently acquitted.

12 Interview with the author, 4 August 1982.

On 11 September 1982 a bus-load of Akali volunteers being transported to jail was hit by a train at an unmanned level crossing, resulting in 34 deaths and injuries to 21. Akali leaders accused the government of deliberate murder and a month later brought the ashes of those killed in a procession to Parliament House in Delhi and clashed with the police. Hardly a day passed without killings, bank robberies, or the looting of arms from state armouries. The most audacious of such crimes took place on the morning of 25 April 1983 when A. S. Atwal, Deputy Inspector General of police, having said his prayers at the Temple, was shot dead at the main entrance as he was leaving. The murder was witnessed by scores of armed policemen on duty at the gate as well as hundreds of worshippers. The assailant leisurely walked down the bazar before going back to the Temple without anyone daring to pursue him. Instead of suspending the agitation till violence had abated, Akali leaders opened up new fronts: the *nahar roko* (stop the canal) was followed by *rasta roko* (block roads) on 4 April 1983, to *rail roko* (17 June), to *kaam roko* (stop work) on 29 August. At the same time 'hit lists' of people marked for destruction began to circulate.[13] Amongst the targets was Virendra, editor of the *Daily Pratap* of Jullundur: a parcel bomb addressed to him killed two of his employees. The most dastardly of this unending succession of crimes took place on the night of 5 October 1983 when a bus travelling from Amritsar to Delhi was hijacked near the village of Dhilwan; six Hindu passengers were off-loaded and gunned down.[14] It became evident that Darbara Singh was unable to cope with the increasing tide of violence. The next day (6 October 1983) his

13 Apart from Bhindranwale's supporters and the Babbar Khalsa, several gangs of terrorists had by then come into existence.

14 Sant Longowal and some Akali leaders expressed regret over the massacre.

An appeal to Longowal to persuade the high priest of the takhts to declare killers of innocent people *rannkhyas* (excommunicated) was stalled by G. S. Tohra, who fell that blanket excommunication would amount to condemning the entire community. Longowal only expressed his sorrow over the incident.

government was dismissed and the State brought under President's Rule.

Bhindranwale regarded Darbara Singh's downfall as a personal triumph and became even more intemperate in his utterances. Tensions began to build up between different groups in the Temple complex. On one side was Sant Longowal representing the less vociferous majority which included P. S. Badal's supporters: they disapproved of violence and were in favour of arriving at some settlement with the government. On the other side was Bhindranwale and the equally violent Babbar Khalsa and the Akhand Kirtani Jatha, fiercely antagonistic towards each other but fired with the same ideology of establishing a separate Sikh state. If they failed to persuade the Sikh masses to their point of view, they would achieve their goal by terrorizing Punjabi Hindus into leaving the Punjab and thereby provoke Hindus in other parts of India to drive out Sikhs living among them and force them to return to the Punjab. If thereby they succeeded in changing communal ratios in the state from 60 per cent Sikh and 40 per cent Hindu to 80 per cent or over of Sikhs, then they would have at least succeeded in achieving a de facto Khalistan.

While Bhindranwale had contempt for Longowal's Akalis and a personal animus against Badal, he dreaded the Babbar Khalsa and the Akhand Kirtani Jatha. For some months the three factions lived in close proximity in the *serais* adjoining the offices of the SGPC on the eastern end of the Temple complex. There was frequent exchange of abuse and fisticuffs. Sant Longowal threatened to quit unless Bhindranwale was expelled from the Temple. Bhindranwale refused to oblige because he knew that once he left the sanctuary, the police would arrest him. Tohra as president of the SGPC was responsible for the maintainance of peace in the Temple. He pressurised a very reluctant Gyani Kirpal Singh to let Bhindranwale and his followers occupy the upper stories of the Akal Takht, of which the Gyani was then Head Priest. Bhindranwale moved to the Akal Takht with his retinue of gunmen, which included the retired Major General Shahbeg Singh, who agreed to train his men in the use of modern

weapons,[15] and another retired Major General, Jaswant Singh Bhullar.

Bhindranwale began to accumulate arms and fortify the Akal Takht. It was not only the forces of the Indian government he had to contend with, but also those of the Babbar Khalsa and the militant Akalis. He made no secret of his dislike for Sant Longowal, whom he derided as another Gandhi and his residence as Gandhi Niwas while his own was called Shakti Niwas (abode of strength). Bhindranwale and Sant Longowal continued to pursue their different paths. On 12 April 1984 Harbans Lal Khanna (an ex-MLA) and president of the district Janata Party, was slain in Amritsar. At his funeral the next day there was a Hindu-Sikh clash in which eight men lost their lives. The same day (3 April), Vishwanath Tiwari, an MP and professor, of Punjabi literature, was shot dead in his home in Chandigarh.[16] On 14 April one Surinder Singh Sodhi, whom Bhindranwale described as his brother, was shot by a woman companion at a tea stall outside the Temple. The next day the woman's mutilated body was found in a gutter. Bhindranwale boasted of having avenged Sodhi's murder within twenty-four hours. On 12 May 1984 Ramesh Chandra, who had succeeded his father, Jagat Narain, as editor of the *Hind Samachar* group, was murdered in his office in Jullundur.[17] Not to be outdone in adventurism, Sant

15 Shahbeg Singh, a Jat Sikh, had a distinguished career in the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 when he trained the Mukti Bahini guerilias. However, during his posting in Madhya Pradesh, he was court-martialled, found guilty of corruption, stripped of his rank and cashiered. He joined the Akali's Dharam Yudh Morcha before becoming Bhindranwale's chief military adviser. He was killed in Operation Blue Star.

16 Dr Tiwari held the Bhai Vir Singh Chair of Punjabi literature at Chandigarh University. He wrote a book in praise of Mrs Gandhi's emergency regime and was nominated to the Rajya Sabha. His stenographer, Manmohan Singh, was the chief functionary of the Dal Khalsa set up on 3 August 1978 with the blessings of Giani Zail Singh. It later joined the extremists.

17 Other notable crimes committed at this period included the murders of Squadron Leader Paramjeet Singh and Sumeet Singh, the editor of *Preet Lari* on 22 February 1984 and the killing of four Hindu passengers on a bus on 21 May 1984.

Longowal announced that from 3 June 1984 (the martyrdom anniversary of Guru Arjun), Sikhs should launch a non-cooperation agitation against the government by refusing to pay land-revenue, water and electricity bills and prevent the movement of food grains out of the Punjab. Advised by her new set of young counsellors, Mrs Gandhi decided that the time had come for reckoning with the Akalis and Bhindranwale.

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20. The Anandpur Sahib Resolution and Other Akali Demands

In order to understand what made the Akalis and the government embark on a collision course it is necessary to go back a few years and examine demands made by the Akalis from time to time and the central government's response to them. The Punjabi Suba had been conceded in 1966, but Chandigarh remained a Union Territory shared as a capital by both Punjab and Haryana. Punjabi-speaking villages contiguous to Punjab still remained with the neighbouring states. The central government continued to control canal headworks and made arbitrary allocations of water of the Sutlej, Ravi and Beas which had fallen to India's share by the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960. The government's tardiness in resolving these basic issues gave the Akalis grounds to charge it of being anti-Sikh. They assiduously cultivated a discrimination complex and kept adding to their list of demands. On its part, the central government, instead of conceding what was legitimately asked for, adopted delaying tactics, thus forcing the Akalis to launch a succession of passive resistance movements which often escalated into violence. Alongside the peaceful morcās grew terrorism which the police countered by brutal repression, often killing innocent people in staged encounters and torturing suspects. Police methods proved counter-productive and brought more recruits to terrorist groups.

The most comprehensive charter of demands made by the Akalis on behalf of the Sikhs was formulated in what came to

be known as the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973. There are at least three versions of the resolution in circulation which Akali leaders interpret differently. Some, like Sant Fateh Singh, held the view that the Punjabi Suba was in fact all they wanted in addition to Chandigarh and contiguous Punjabi-speaking villages, and that this had been substantially conceded in 1966. Others interpreted the Resolution as a demand for an autonomous Sikh-dominated state within the Indian Union. And yet others construed it as a demand for an independent, sovereign Sikh state to be named Khalistan.

The inspiration for framing Sikh demands in a formal resolution came from Kapur Singh, a product of Oxford University and, for some years, a member of the Indian Civil Service. On his dismissal on charges of corruption, he became a bitter critic of the government, joined the Akali party to become its one-man think tank and was elected on its ticket to Parliament. He made his personal grievance into a community grievance and never ceased from accusing the government of discriminating against the Sikhs. It was he who declared Sikhs to be *'sui generis* a free and sovereign people' and persuaded his party to demand a 'self-determined political status'[1] for the Sikhs. His draft was in English. He explained its purpose and contents to Sant Fateh Singh, then head of the Akali Dal. Fateh Singh, who knew no language except Punjabi, nodded his approval. Kapur Singh's draft was based on the assumption that the Sikhs, being a chosen people (*Raj Jati*), were predestined to rule. Master Tara Singh had held somewhat the same view when he said that Sikhs could either be rulers or rebels.

At the time the Resolution was adopted at Anandpur in 1973 it did not attract much attention. Kapur Singh was regarded as an embittered eccentric given to militant posturings and something of a maverick politician. Not much was heard of the Resolution for the next three years until August 1977, when Gyani Ajmer Singh, secretary of the Akali Dal, released another

1 Jaswant Singh Mann, *Some Documents on the Demand for the Sikh Homeland*, Chandigarh, 1969, p. 35.

version of a 'draft of the new policy programme' of the party at Amritsar. This policy programme was based on Kapur Singh's original draft and finalized by a committee consisting, among others, of Prakash Singh Badal (then Chief Minister of Punjab), Gurcharan Singh Tohra,[2] President of the SGPC, Surjit Singh Barnala[3] and Balwant Singh.[4] It was presented at the eighteenth session of the All-India Akali Conference at Ludhiana on 28–9 October 1978, presided over by Jagdev Singh Talwandi.[5] It was proposed by Tohra, seconded by Badal and passed without dissent. Chandrashekhar, leader of the Janata Party, who was present at the conference, had nothing to say about it. Congress

2 Gurcharan Singh, born 1919, in the village of Tohra is a Gill Jat. He studied up to the tenth class but did not take his matriculation examination. He started his political career as a communist before joining the Akali Dal. He was a member of Parliament from 1967–72 and was again elected in 1977. He was a member of the Rajya Sabha for three terms and was elected president of the SGPC for twenty successive years. He has been in and on of jail many times.

3 Surjit Singh is a Dhaliwal Jat born in the village of Atali (District Gurgaon) in 1925. He practised law for some years before entering politics. He was elected to the Punjab Assembly on an Akali ticket and was Education Minister in the Gurnam Singh ministry. He spent eighteen months in jail during the emergency. In 1977 he was elected to the Lok Sabha from Sangrur and became Agriculture Minister in the Janata government. He was detained under NASA for 9 months for burning the constitution. After the assassination of Sant Longowal he was elected president of the Akali Dal. He was Chief Minister of the Punjab during 1985–7. He is also a talented landscape painter.

4 Balwant Singh, born 1929, in the village of Saidpur (Kapurthala) is a Kambhoj. He has an MA degree in economics and an LLB, He started his political career as a member of the Congress party and after losing his first election succeeded in getting elected in 1962; he later joined the Akali Dal. He has been a Minister of Finance in the Punjab and is generally regarded as a shrewd but unreliable politician chiefly interested in making money.

5 Jagdev Singh, born 1927, is a Gill Jat from the village of Talwandi (District Ludhiana). He has studied up to class six. In 1970 he was minister of state in the Gurnam Singh ministry and later in the Badal ministry. In 1976 he was a elected to the Lok Sabha and, later, to the Rajya Sabha. He supports the demand for Khalistan.

leaders also did not react, to it. The Communist Party (Marxist), which ruled West Bengal and had been clamouring for greater autonomy, saw nothing against Akalis making similar demands for the Punjab. Apart from the BJP, only the Communist Party of India (CPI) expressed disapproval inasmuch as it felt that the kind of autonomy the Akalis were asking for would lead to the disintegration of the country.

Controversy over the exact wording of the resolution did not end and different factions of the Akalis continued to interpret its provisions as it suited them. Sant Harchand Singh Longowal,[6] as President of the Akali Dal, issued an 'authentic version' of the resolution which he sent to members of both houses of the Indian Parliament.[7] In a short introduction, he claimed that the Resolution was 'nothing more than a device to guard against the danger of further encroachments' through 'repeated and ill-conceived amendments of the Constitution by which provincial powers had been curtailed' by the Central Government against the spirit of a truly federal constitution. He denied categorically that the Resolution envisaged a separate or even an autonomous Sikh state and was only meant for better readjustment of Centre-State relations.

The Anandpur Resolution acquired the status of a Magna Carta of Sikh demands as seen by its most important political party. The preamble asserts that 'the Shiromani Akali Dal is the

6 Harchand Singh (1934–85) was a Diya Jat from the village of Gidervani (District Sangrur). He had very little formal education and was the village Granthi and an Akali worker till he was inducted into politics by Master Tara Singh in 1960. He was elected to the Punjab Assembly in 1967. He was made 'dictator' of the morcā against the emergency (1975–7) and then of the Dharam Yudh Morcā.

7 It is worth noting that if Punjab's boundaries were redrawn as spelt out in the Resolution, the proportion of Sikhs would be reduced from 60 per cent to possibly under 50 per cent as most of the areas asked for, though Punjabi-speaking, are largely populated by Hindus. When Akali leaders approached the then Prime Minister, Morarji Desai, and Deputy Prime Minister, Charan Singh, to declare Sikhs a minority community like the Muslims and Christians, both turned down the request on the grounds that they regarded Sikhs as a part of the Hindu community. See Appendix.

supreme body of the Sikh Panth and as such as fully authorized to represent and lead them.' Its religious aims are couched in pseudo-religious terminology: 'The propagation of religion and Sikh tenets and condemnation of aetheism ... eradication of poverty and ill-health, illiteracy and casteism as laid down in Sikh scriptures.' Included among the aims is 'maintaining the realization of the Panth's independent entity and creation of such an environment where Sikh sentiment can find its full expression.' Following this are other religious aims: 'The primary task is to inculcate a sense of Divinity among the Sikhs.' This is to be achieved through training theologians, hymn-singers, publishing religious literature and *Amrit Prachār*. The only controversial part of the religious aims is the enactment of an All-India Gurdwara Act to bring all historical gurdwaras in India under the control of the SGPC as well as its having a say in the management of gurdwaras all over the world, 'to be woven in a single chain in order to have effective benefits of the common means of religious propaganda.' It also asks for free access to the birthplace of Guru Nanak (in Pakistan) and other gurdwaras 'which have been snatched away from the Panth.' (Kapur Singh had demanded 'Vatican Status' for Nankana Sahib.)

The religion-based phraseology may have some justification coming from a religion-based party, but there is less excuse for its usage in what are described as political aims. The most controversial is the sub-preamble: 'The panthic political aim is definitely based on the directives of the Tenth Guru, which is engraved on the pages of Sikh history and in the mind of the Khalsa Panth—its aim is, *khalsaji ka bol bala*—"where the voice of the Khalsa Sikhs will be pre-eminent." Although it was explained away as meaning no more than 'maintaining the realization of the Panth's independent entity', etc. as stated earlier in the same resolution, most non-Akalis remained unconvinced. To them it was clearly an attempt to establish a theocracy in a secular India.

The political demands of the Resolution are confined to the need to redraw boundaries to incorporate Punjabi-speaking areas left out of the Punjab, restricting the Central Government's

powers to defence, foreign affairs, posts and telegraph, currency and railways; and safeguards for Sikh minorities living outside the Punjab.

The Resolution castigated the Central Government's foreign policy as 'useless and harmful' and exhorted the government to cultivate 'good relations with all neighbouring countries, particularly where Sikhs reside or where their religious shrines are found.' (The reference was primarily to Pakistan.) It also demands the maintenance of Sikh proportions in the defence services and the right of every person to carry firearms without licences.

The class interests of the Akali party are reflected in the economic policy resolutions. They ask for raising the ceiling on land holdings from seventeen to thirty standard acres per family, the abolition of intermediaries and fixing prices for agricultural produce on the basis of the cost of production of the average farmer. Such prices should be fixed in advance by the State and not the Central Government. The State should also take over wholesale trading in food grains and ensure the free movement of agricultural produce, treating the entire country as a single food zone.

While claiming more land for farmers and the right to get the maximum prices for their produce in a free market, the Resolution demands that 'all basic industries should be brought under the public sector' and 'all consumer industries dealing with essential commodities be nationalized'. The Resolution betrays a similar bias in dealing with labour. For industrial labour it generously asks for a 'need-based minimum wage'; but for agricultural labour only that 'minimum wages be reviewed, and if necessary, increased.' It is significant that, while the Resolution demands the speedier completion of the Thein Dam and the setting up of more power plants including one based on atomic energy, it has nothing to say about the division of river waters which later became the Akali Dal's most important demand on the Central Government and the neighbouring states.

While most Akalis hotly denied that the Anandpur Resolution bore the seeds of separatism, there were always small groups

equally emphatic in asserting that it was based on the assumption that the Sikhs were a separate *qaum* entided to self-government in a state of their own. The separatists received support from an unexpected quarter. In March 1981 the Chief Khalsa Diwan invited Ganga Singh Dhillon to speak at the Sikh Educational Conference, where he described Sikhs as a nation apart from other Indians and persuaded the assemblage to pass a resolution asking the United Nations to accord them Associated Status. It took the Chief Khalsa Diwan a month to pass another resolution (16 April 1981) to rescind the earlier one as being contrary to the aims of the Diwan. But the mischief had been done inasmuch as that the oldest and most respected socio-political organization of the Sikhs had unwittingly allowed itself to be used as a forum to propagate the separate nation theory.[8]

When the Akalis were in power, as they were when the Anandpur Resolution was formally passed, and again during the Janata regime, they did not exert much pressure on the central government to have it accepted. They kept it as a not-too-secret weapon in their archives, to be brought out and brandished when they were out of power and use its non-acceptance as a grievance justifying agitation. Also, when it suited them they put it across as no more than a demand for more autonomy, just as the communist parties, the Janata and regional parties like the DMK, the AIDMK and Telegu Desam were doing. The one snag in their argument was that, being a purely Sikh party, they never tried to gain the support of Punjabi Hindus and thus tainted their demand with a communal colour. There was also the irritating reference to the Sikhs being a separate qaum. However much some Akali leaders tried to explain that by qaum they meant a separate religious or communal identity and not a separate

8 Gurtej Singh Brar, a senior member of the Indian Administrative Services, said in a public statement: 'The Sikh-nation theory has been current among the Sikhs since the time of Guru Nanak.' He added, 'There should be others like Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to lead the Sikhs and take up their cause of righteousness and truth.' (*India Today*, 30 April 1983, p. 20.) Brar was dismissed from service in August 1982 and joined Bhindranwale's camp.

nation, there were others in their own party who made no secret that the Anandpur Resolution was an expression of their desire to establish a separate national identity.

Mrs Gandhi should have known that the Akalis in power were a breed apart from Akalis out of power. If they were allowed to rule the Punjab or have a share in ruling it, they were more than willing to co-operate with the Central Government. If denied power-sharing, they were strong enough to launch agitations and make the task of governance difficult. When Mrs Gandhi won the parliamentary elections in 1980, Badal had it conveyed to her that, if he was left undisturbed in the Punjab he would co-operate with the Central Government. Mrs Gandhi spurned his offer and dismissed his government. She had scores to settle with the Akalis because they had backed Jayaprakash Narayan and continued a passive resistance movement against the Emergency that she had imposed on the country on 26 June 1975 and retained for eighteen months. She was also riding the crest of the wave and had no difficulty in winning a clear majority in the Punjab Legislative Assembly and making Darbara Singh the Chief Minister.[9] The Akalis knew that the logic of electoral numbers was against their being able to out-vote the Congress party and promptly decided to create difficulties for the administration. Between August 1980 and September 1981 they organized a succession of seven agitations and sent over 25,000 volunteers to court arrest. When the Central Government asked them to spell out their demands they sent a list of forty-five grievances.[10] Some were substantial: Chandigarh had not been transferred to the Punjab (but Badal himself had not pressed this issue when he was Chief Minister); the State's boundaries had not been readjusted and Punjabi-speaking villages were left

9 Darbara Singh, born 1916, is a Johal Jat from the village of Jandiala (District Jullundur). He joined the Quit India Movement in 1942 and was in jail for three years. He was elected to the Punjab legislature on a Congress ticket and won the seat in subsequent elections. He was Chief Minister of the Punjab from 1980 to 6 October 1983. He was subsequently elected to the Rajya Sabha.

10 See Appendix.

in neighbouring states; Punjab's demand for a fairer allocation of river waters had not been conceded; there were no heavy industries in the Punjab and very little central aid; the proportion of Sikhs in the army was rapidly going down; Punjab farmers were being evicted from Uttar Pradesh; an All-India Gurdwaras Act had not been passed; there was governmental interference in Sikh religious affairs and in the management of gurdwaras. For the first time, 'non-recognition of Sikh personal law' was made into a grievance. The list also included some trivial demands of purely religious import: that Amritsar be declared a 'holy city,' the same as Kurukshetra, Hardwar and Varanasi wherein the sale of tobacco and liquor were forbidden; that the Golden Temple be allowed to have its own transmitter to relay religious services; and a train known as the Flying Mail be renamed Harimandir Express.[11] When no notice was taken of their demands, the Akalis decided to launch a Dharam Yudh Morcā (battle for righteousness) and appointed Sant Harchand Singh Longowal to organize it. In a pamphlet entitled *Why This Holy War?* he explained its objectives in the following words: 'The Sikhs have been forced to launch a holy war against the Government of India because the ruling party has not only refused to fulfil its solemn promises made by it to them on the eve of Independence, but also because ever since it has consistently and deliberately tried to reduce them to the unenviable position of second class citizens.'[12]

Mrs Gandhi did not take the Dharam Yudh Morcha seriously and was reassured by Chief Minister Darbara Singh that he would be able to cope with it. Neither of them realized that the longer they dilly-dallied over Akali demands, the more ground the moderates would yield to hardliners and Khalistanis.

In October 1981 the Akali Dal presented the government with a short list of fifteen demands.[13] In this they repeated that the

11 The justification put forward for this demand was that there were fifteen trains named after Hindu places of pilgrimage but none bearing the name of a Sikh shrine.

12 Satinder Singh, *Khalistan*, p. 54.

13 See Annexure.

Anandpur Sahib Resolution was not separatist and was being pressed for acceptance so 'that the progress of States would entail prosperity of the centre.'[14] The list also included the demand for the release of Bhindranwale (then in jail), a licence to float a new bank in place of the Punjab and Sindh Bank which had been nationalized, and second-language status for Punjabi in the neighbouring states of Himachal, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi—where Punjabi was in fact the second most widely spoken language.[15] There was nothing in either the forty-five or the fifteen demands that could possibly be construed as separatist or unconstitutional. Nor did either list bear much resemblance to the Anandpur Sahib Resolution in the choice of words, the assertion of separate identity or paramountcy. All that was required was a certain amount of give and take between the Akalis, the States concerned and the centre to arrive at an amicable settlement. But it did not suit Mrs Gandhi to agree to any settlement which might be construed as a concession made to Sikhs at the expense of Hindus. She had her eyes firmly fixed on her party's electoral prospects in the neighbouring states. And at the time, elections were scheduled to take place in Haryana.

In the *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation,* the government took great pains to establish that it had bent backwards to accommodate the Akalis but was thwarted at every step by the Akalis

14 See Appendix.

15 It was only in January 1984 that the Akali Dal formulated its demand for a separate Sikh personal law by asking for an amendment to article 25 of the Constitution. Their object was to obviate the application of the Hindu Marriage Act and the Hindu Succession Act to the Sikhs. The Sikhs had their own Anand Marriage Act; the Akali leaders were of the opinion that, instead of giving daughters equal rights in their fathers' property with their brothers, they should, when married, get rights in the property of their fathers-in-law. They also objected to the phrasing of the explanation appended to sub-clause 2 of article 25. Although explanatory, one clearly stated that 'the wearing and earning of Kirpans shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religions, and the reference to Hindu religions shall be construed accordingly.'

shifting their stand or coming up with new demands. It appends a calendar of twenty-six meetings that took place between Akali leaders and the Central Government between 16 November 1981 and 2 February 1984; three were with the Prime Minister, four with members of the Union Cabinet, nine were secret and ten with leaders of the opposition parties present. The Akali representatives remained somewhat the same: Longowal, Tohra, Badal, Barnala, Balwant Singh and, at times, R. S. Bhatia, editor of *Quami Ekta*, and Ravi Inder Singh. The government fielded a succession of cabinet ministers and senior bureaucrats. Several leaders of the opposition parties, including Farooq Abdullah (Chief Minister of Kashmir), L. K. Advani and Madhu Dandavate, as well as old hands like Swaran Singh and young hands like Amarinder Singh of Patiala were brought in. The most active in trying to get the two parties to come to an agreement was Harkishen Singh Surjeet, the Communist MP and member of the Party's politbureau. Non-governmental sources maintain that on five occasions the terms of a settlement were almost finalized and it was not the Akalis but Mrs Gandhi who resiled from her commitments. One of these was drawn up by Harkishen Singh Surjeet and Swaran Singh, acting on behalf of Mrs Gandhi on 2 November 1982. It was agreed that the settlement would be announced the next day in Parliament. The announcement made the following day was at variance with what had been agreed to by the Akali leaders and they promptly denounced it as a betrayal of trust. Swaran Singh commented, 'this is neither the language of the statement nor the spirit.'[16] A fortnight later (18 November), another settlement was arrived at at the house of P. C. Alexander, Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. Once again, Mrs Gandhi changed her mind at the last minute.[17] The talks were resumed

16 *The Punjab: Crisis and Response*, p. 237.

17 'It was decided that the Akali leaders, accompanied by Amarinder Singh, Congress (I) MP, and the Union Home Secretary, T. N. Chaturvedi, would leave for Amritsar by special plane at 8.30 p.m. Chaturvedi would read out the decision to the Akali Dal president at Amritsar and by midnight the announcement of an accord should be made. Balwant Singh

early in 1983 at the insistence of the opposition leaders. At these tripartite meetings, at which the cabinet committee members were present, the Akalis agreed to transfer seventeen Hindi-speaking villages to Haryana. The talks broke down because government representatives insisted that Mrs Gandhi's 1970 award should be accepted in toto, that is, Chandigarh would be conceded to the Punjab if the Akalis agreed to give Fazilka and Abohar to Haryana. The same thing was repeated in another round of talks on 20 April 1983. The Akalis agreed to part with Hindi-speaking areas contiguous to Chandigarh, but not Fazilka and Abohar which were neither Hindi-speaking nor contiguous. What irked Mrs Gandhi most was that on 30 June 1983 the opposition parties and Akali leaders evolved a consensus without including the government's representatives in their discussions. Mrs Gandhi rejected the consensus. 'Can I give Haryana's land to Punjab? Is it my land?' she asked on 21 July 1983.[18] In sheer disgust the Akalis decided to embarrass the central government by letting the world know how they were being treated. They organized bands of volunteers to raise anti-government slogans at the Asian Games scheduled for the following month. Mrs Gandhi's response to the threat and the methods adopted to prevent disturbances at the Games created strong resentment among all Sikhs. Bhajan Lal, Chief Minister of Haryana, issued instructions to his police that every Sikh going towards Delhi by rail or road be stopped, searched and questioned. Amongst those who were humiliated were army officers in uniform[19] and Congress party members of Parlia-

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spoke to Sant Longowal on the phone from Kapurthala House (the Punjab government's guest house in New Delhi) and got his approval. The Akali leaders vacated their rooms and were waiting for the Home Secretary who was to take them to the airport. When they did not get any information till 9 p.m., Amarinder Singh contacted the Prime Minister's house where the Political Affairs Committee of the cabinet was meeting and he was told that there was some hitch.' *The Punjab: Crisis and Response*, p. 237.

18 Ibid., p. 238.

19 These included retired Major Generals Jaswant Singh Bhullar and Narinder Singh, both of whom later joined Bhindranwale. Others stopped

ment. For the first time, the Sikhs as a community experienced religious discrimination and this time it was not the Akalis or the Khalistanis but minions of the government who treated them as a people apart from other Indians.

Mrs Gandhi continued to play political games with the Akalis. On 27 February 1984 she made a grand gesture by announcing at a gathering of her own supporters at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib in New Delhi that the government had accepted three religious demands put up by the Akalis. Although she was negotiating with the Akalis she wanted the credit to go to the Congress Sikhs.[20] Again, in February 1984, on the eve of tripartite talks (between the government, the Akalis and leaders of opposition parties), and when it appeared that all parties were ready to append their signatures to a memorandum of settlement, anti-Sikh riots were engineered in towns of Haryana, forcing the Akalis to abandon negotiations.[21] The fruitless toing-and-froing of Akali leaders between Amritsar, Chandigarh and Delhi got on Sant Longowal's nerves. On one side was an icy cool, calculating and evasive Mrs Gandhi—on the other Bhindranwale breathing fire and brimstone down his neck. In sheer exasperation he issued a statement: 'I want to tell Mrs Gandhi our

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and questioned included retired Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh and retired Lt. General Jagjit Singh Arora, who later joined the Akali party and was elected to the Rajya Sabha. Amongst others detained and questioned were Amarjit Kaur, Congress member of the Rajya Sabha and her husband.

20 At the time the President of the Delhi Gurdwara Committee was H. S. Manchanda. He was shot dead on 28 March 1984.

21 According to the *India Today* of 31 July 1984, when the last secret meeting between the Akali leaders and government's nominees was held on 25 May 1984 (a week before the army was sent to the Punjab) and failed to arrive at a settlement, three ministers of the central government, P. V. Narasimha Rao, Pranab Mukherjee and Shiv Shankar, consulted the highest intelligence agency in the country, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and advised the Prime Minister to go ahead and deploy the army in the Punjab. The *White Paper* has nothing to say about what transpired at this secret meeting with the Akalis nor at any of the others which took place in the home of the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary, P. C. Alexander,

patience is getting exhausted. She should stop playing with fire.[22] At the same time, he announced the raising of an army of 100,000 *mar jiware* (living dead) who would dedicate their lives to the attainment of their goal. The Akalis were fast approaching the point of no return.[23]

22 *India Today*, 30 April 1983, p. 16.

23 Harkishen Singh Surjeet was categorical in laying the blame for the impasse on the government: 'Mrs Gandhi created Bhindranwale. She wanted to build him up as an alternative leadership to the Akalis so that he was amenable to her. No other explanation can be there. Three days after he is appointed, P. S. Bhinder (Commissioner of Police) issues a statement that there are no criminals hidden in the Temple nor are there arms. In March 1984 Rajiv Gandhi goes to Chandigarh and praises Bhindranwale.' Interview with Nikhil Lakshman as quoted in *The Punjab Crisis: Challenge and Response*, pp. 338–9.

21. Fatal Miscalculation[1]

In a televised broadcast on the evening of 2 June 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi prepared the nation for the action she was about to undertake against the Akalis and Bhindranwale. After accusing the Akalis of endlessly making new demands and mounting one agitation after another, she presented them with an alibi by suggesting that 'the leadership of the organization appears to have been seized by a group of fanatics and terrorists whose instruments for achieving whatever they may have in view are murder, arson and loot... Holy shrines have been turned into shelters for criminals and murderers, their sanctity as places of worship has been undermined.'[2] She narrated the tortuous course of negotiations since 1981, claiming that 'our [that is, the government's], attitude was one of accommodation of all reasonable demands',[3] and attempted to show how her government had conceded whatever the Akalis had asked for in the name of religion, apart from being prepared to negotiate on their territorial claims and share of river waters. She did not, of course, refer to the occasions when a settlement had been virtually arrived at and she, not the Akalis, had found excuses not to append her signature to it. She had to build the case

1 *Punjab: Fatal Miscalculation.* Title of a compilation of articles by Patwant Singh and Harji Malik (1985).

2 *The White Paper on the Punjab Agitation,* Govt. of India, 1984, pp. 105, 107.

3 Ibid., p. 105.

that the government was left with no choice except what it was about to do. 'What do we do in this new situation?' she asked her audience. Nothing particularly new had occurred in the preceding months: incidents of violence had continued as before, Bhindranwale had continued to make hateful utterances against the 'Hindu government' and the 'Delhi Darbar' from the now fortified Akal Takht. Perhaps the only new move which she could pre-empt was the Akali's threat to prevent movement of food grains out of the Punjab by blocking road and rail traffic. They had also exhorted the peasants to refuse paying land revenue and water rates to the government, and instead, deposit them at the Akal Takht.[4] It was they who had chosen 3 June, the anniversary of the martyrdom of the founder of the Temple, Guru Arjun, to launch another agitation. Instead of ordering the police to prevent Akali volunteers from impeding the traffic of food grains, Mrs Gandhi had decided to assault the citadel from where emanated edicts to defy her government. 'Even at this late hour I appeal to the Akali leaders to call off their threatened agitation and accept the framework of peaceful settlement which we have offered' she said. She ended with the appeal: 'Don't shed blood, shed hatred.'[5] At the time she had already authorized the army to do precisely the opposite: to shed blood which, she ought to have known, would generate hatred of the kind the country had not experienced since Independence.

Many months earlier the army had been instructed to keep itself in readiness to move into the Golden Temple whenever ordered to do so. A replica of the Temple complex had been prepared at Chakrata (near Mussoorie) to familiarize besiegers with its layout, entrances and fortified positions. Information of

4 The Bharat Kisan Union (BKU), a non-political union of farmers, had been agitating for almost two years for the reduction of water and electricity rates and prices of fertilizers. In the first week of May 1984 it called for a boycott of wheat markets (*mandis*) and no wheat reached the markets. The *White Paper* has nothing to say about the BKU agitation and pins the blame solely on the Akalis.

5 Ibid., p. 109.

the strength of Bhindranwale's fighters, their dispositions, and the kind of weapons they possessed had been gathered by the intelligence agencies of the police and the army. This was not too arduous a task as the Temple was visited by thousands of people at all hours of the day and night, and even Bhindranwale, his aide Amrik Singh, and the commanders of his motley army of 300–400 men; Generals Shahbeg Singh and Jaswant Singh Bhullar, had been granting interviews to journalists. Some army officers, including Major General K. S. Brar, a clean-shaven Sikh who was to lead the operation, had gone round the Temple incognito to see the defenders' fortifications.

It is difficult to be certain about the people who counselled Mrs Gandhi that negotiations with the Akalis should cease and the army be ordered to take over the job of bringing Bhindranwale to heel. But there is reason to believe that they included her relative Arun Nehru, Arun Singh, a clean shaven Sikh who regarded himself as an expert on the Punjab, Deputy Minister of Defence, K. P. Singh Deo and her son, Rajiv Gandhi, then General Secretary of the Congress party.[6] The army was reluctant to take on the job. It was meant to protect the country's frontiers, not fight its own people. Its reluctance was overcome by placing Punjab under military rule. According to the *White Paper*, 'the government was convinced that this challenge to the security, unity and integrity of the country could not be met by the normal law and order agencies at the disposal of the State.'[7]

Giani Zail Singh as President and Supreme Commander of the armed forces was asked by Mrs Gandhi to sanction putting Punjab under military rule. Once the army was in control, there was no need for any further sanction from the civil authorities for it to take the action it deemed necessary. President Zail

6 As late as 23 March 1984 Rajiv Gandhi stated: 'I think we should not enter the Golden Temple. The police can enter temples, but it is a question of what is good balance. Today as we see it, it is not as if the Sikhs are against the Hindus, and we should do nothing that separates them.' (*The Punjab Crisis*, p. 227.)

7 *The White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*, p. 3.

Singh was kept in the dark about the designs on the Temple. On 30 May Mrs Gandhi spent over an hour with him, briefing him on the fresh proposals for a settlement with the Akalis. If she had given him an inkling of what she had in mind he could at least have warned her of the hazards of undertaking a military operation when large numbers of pilgrim would be spending several days and nights in the Temple complex to participate in services in memory of their martyred guru.[8]

It appears that Mrs Gandhi made a last-minute effort to avoid armed confrontation. According to an unauthenticated report,[9] she wrote a personal note to Bhindranwale and was undoubtedly behind Rajiv Gandhi's statement that Bhindranwale was a spiritual not a political leader.[10] She was misinformed of Bhindranwale's strength and beguiled into believing that most Sikhs would approve of the government liberating their Temple from the clutches of terrorists. As a matter of fact, the overwhelming majority of worshippers were not concerned with the Akalis or their agitation, nor over-exercised with the SGPC's letting Bhindranwale convert parts of the Temple into a fortress. They were not exposed to any of these: they carried out their religious ritual without even catching a glimpse of Bhindranwale. To the Sikh masses neither Mrs Gandhi nor Bhindranwale, neither the Akali Dal nor the Congress party, nor any individual politician, mattered very much; the sanctity of the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht did.

Not only were Mrs Gandhi and her advisers unable to foresee the consequences of sending the army into the Temple, the army commanders' assessment of the resistance that Bhindranwale's men might put up was woefully underestimated and bordered

8 The government's *White Paper* says nothing about the martyrdom anniversary nor of the presence of pilgrims in the Temple premises at the time.

9 Devinder Singh Duggal, librarian of the archives of the Golden Temple, claims to have read this out to Bhindranwale on 3 June 1984 and maintains that the note was destroyed in the fire during Operation Blue Star.

10 *Indian Express*, 16 May 1984.

on the wishful.[11] They felt that a show of strength followed by a bold frontal assault would frighten them into submission.[12]

Although it was Mrs Gandhi who gave the army the green signal, it was her young gang of counsellors who directed the operation in close collaboration with the army's top brass. The Chief of Army Staff, General A. S. Vaidya, deputed Lt. General Sunderji, GOC Western Command, to take charge of the operation with two Sikh generals, Ranjit Singh Dayal, Chief of Staff, Western Command who was security adviser to the Punjab Governor, with Major General K. S. Brar to assist him.

Some days before Mrs Gandhi's broadcast, the army had begun to take up positions in the Punjab. Large contingents were brought in from different parts of the country by road, rail, and air. These included tanks, mountain guns, divers and even police dogs. Seventy thousand men in uniform were posted at strategic points—most of them in and around Amritsar. The border with Pakistan was sealed off.

The task entrusted to the army on 2 June was: 'to check and control extremists and communal violence in the State of Punjab and the Union Territory of Chandigarh, provide security to the people and restore normalcy....' The army commanders thought that flag marches and strict enforcement of curfew regulations, followed by periodical announcements asking people to come out of the Golden Temple and about forty other temples where it suspected extremists were hiding, would be enough.

11 In an interview given after the operation, General Sunderji commented that to say 'intelligence was inadequate' was the 'understatement of the year;' it was virtually non-existent. (Chopra, *Agony of the Punjab*, p. 27.) Four intelligence agencies involved in gathering information were the CID, RAW, the Intelligence Bureau and Military Intelligence. On 13 June 1984 it was admitted before leaders of the opposition that government intelligence had failed and that the army was taken by surprise by the nature and quality of weapons discovered in the temple. (*The Punjab Crisis*, p. 230.)

12 The *White Paper* ruefully admits that 'tactical intelligence in regard to the strength and disposition of terrorist gangs was inadequate' (p. 44). It is also silent on the number of Bhindranwale followers and other groups like the Babbar Khalsa which engaged the Indian army in the action.

Akali leaders, including Sant Longowal, G. S. Tohra, B. S. Ramoowalia, the widow Amarjeet Kaur and about 350 others were lodged on the eastern side of the Temple where the kitchen, *serais* and offices of the Akali Dal and the SGPC were situated. They might well have responded to the army's offer and come out to prevent unnecessary bloodshed in the Temple—but they were under the watchful eyes of Bhindranwale's men entrenched in the Akal Takht at the opposite end of the complex and right beneath the three towers, the two Ramgarma Buquers and the water tower, on which members of the Babbar Khalsa had their nests of snipers.[13] The best they could do was to shut themselves in their rooms and pray that the action would soon be over. Bhindranwale continued to belch fire and contempt. Even after the army had completely surrounded the Temple he told a press correspondent who asked him what he planned to do now that he was outnumbered and outgunned: 'Numbers don't count. There are always more sheep than lions... when the tiger sleeps, the birds chirp. But when the tiger awakens, the birds fly away.'[14] He told another party of journalists. 'If the authorities enter Indira will crumble, we will slice them into small pieces.... Let them come.'[15] He was more outspoken than before about Khalistan. 'I have definitely not opposed it. But at the moment I can't say I support it,' he replied. When prompted by his aides to be more specific, he added, 'Frankly, I don't think that Sikhs can either live in or with India.[16]

By 1 June all was ready for the final assault. The government's paramilitary forces, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Border Security Force (BSF), opened fire on different positions occupied by those inside the Temple in order to ascertain where they were and what kind of weapons they had. Despite eight hours of probing, the besieged did not oblige them

13 As late as on 4 June Tohra had gone across to the other side to plead with Bhiridranwale to yield; he was contemptuously turned back as a coward.

14 *The Sunday Observer*, 10 June 1982.

15 Kuldip Nayar, *Tragedy of Punjab*, p. 92.

16 Ibid.

by returning fire. Eleven men, all inside the Temple, lost their lives and dozens were wounded. At 9 p.m. a thirty-hour curfew was clamped on the city. Sant Longowal made several attempts to get President Zail Singh on the phone; the President's secretary replied that he was not available. Longowal called an emergency meeting of the Akali Dal High Command, but none except Tohra were able to turn up. The meeting was postponed to 4 June. Longowal addressed a letter to Mrs Gandhi accusing her government of 'waging a new war against the Sikhs' and warned her that 'every bullet fired at the Golden Temple will hit every Sikh wherever he be in the world.'[17] The head granthi of the temple and the high priest of the Akal Takht appealed to the Sikhs to fight and destroy the evil doers.[18] Decks were cleared for action: a series of ordinances banning the entry of foreigners in the Punjab were promulgated; censorship was imposed on all Punjabi papers; road, rail, and air services suspended. The Temple's power connections were cut off, plunging the complex in darkness, and the cordon round it was tightened. Bhindranwale's men lit bonfires in different places to watch movements of troops and repel their attempts to advance. The plan to cow down the defenders by show of force had flopped. The attendance in the Temple on 3 June (Guru Arjun's martyrdom anniversary) was not as large as usual; nevertheless, it ran into thousands as curfew had been relaxed for a couple of hours. Sant Longowal issued a statement rejecting Mrs Gandhi's televized broadcast offer of 2 June. That evening (3 June) the Temple's telephone and drinking water connections were also cut off. The next morning (4 June) the strategy was changed. Top priority was given to dislodging snipers of the Babbar Khalsa in positions of vantage on top of the three towers and some high buildings overlooking the Temple. Mountain guns were brought into action and the snipers' nests blown up. Though on the same side, the Babbars had acted independently and often in defiance of the orders of General Shahbeg Singh. But their elimination cleared

17 H. S. Bhanwar, *Diary Dey Pannay*, p. 21.
18 Ibid., p. 24.

the way for the army to move in from the eastern side-entrance where the kitchen, serais and offices of the SGPC were located. This began on 5 June. The men inside were ordered to surrender. A couple of hundred menials of the SGPC and their families came out; others, fearing both the army and the wrath of the defenders, stayed where they were. By then reports started coming in that the Sikh peasantry around Amritsar was up in arms carrying whatever rustic weapons they possessed, and were converging on the city from all directions to force the army to raise the siege. Huge mobs numbering upwards of 20,000 each were spotted by helicopters. Tanks and armoured cars were sent out against them. Army commanders realized that time was running out and, unless they liquidated resistance in the Temple, they might have to face a general uprising of the Sikhs. They decided to finish the task during the night of 5–6 June, no matter what it cost them in lives or damage to the Temple. They threw in all they had: their commandos, frogmen, helicopters, armoured vehicles and tanks. They first occupied the langar (kitchen), and the serais and premises of the SGPC where the Akali leaders had cloistered themselves. An hour after midnight Longowal, Tohra, Ramoowalia, Amarjeet Kaur, and scores of others surrendered to the army.[19] As they were doing, so, snipers picked out and shot dead two of Bhindranwale's enemies and a grenade was lobbed in the crowd (nobody knows by whom), killing scores of others. The army entered the Temple from three sides, the main assault being through the broad openway from where they had taken the Akali leaders. Armoured carriers and tanks with men behind them entered the Temple parikarma to face deadly fire from the Akal Takht and the buildings around. An armoured carrier that led the advance was knocked out by a rocket. Tanks were brought in. One sank under its own weight and got stuck. Tank lights with their blinding glare

19 Since the manner in which Akali leaders were taken became a subject of dispute, General K. S. Brar's version is perhaps the most reliable. In an interview given on 14 June 1984 he said, 'Longowal and Tohra when surrounded gave themselves up. They did not put up any fight.' Chopra, *Agony of the Punjab*, p. 31.

were switched on and shells fired into the Akal Takht. One went through the Darshani Deodhi at one end of the viaduct leading to the Harimandir. Another hit the Akal Takht and brought down most of the edifice. The battle raged along the parikarma from room to room. Batches of Bhindranwale's men emerged from its basement to take on the army jawans. By the morning of 6 June, the army had established control over the Temple and its immediate surroundings. By 4.30 a.m. army commandos managed to get to the Akal Takht. The battle raged for another two hours. 'The extremists fought to the last man,' said General Brar. The bullet-ridden bodies of Bhindranwale, Amrik Singh (who had been married a few days earlier) and General Shahbeg Singh, still clutching his walkie-talkie set, were found in the basement.[20]

Similar battles were waged by the army in another forty odd gurdwaras where they suspected terrorists to be hiding. These included Dukh Nivaran at Patiala and gurdwaras at Taran Taran and Moga.[21]

20 General Jaswant Singh Bhullar had made a timely disappearance from the scene of action. Later, he was allowed to escape to the United States to continue propaganda for Khalistan.

21 The sequence of events narrated in the government's *White Paper* are not borne out by eyewitnesses present in the Temple complex during Operation Blue Star. Their versions were collected by a team of five researchers led by Mrs Amiya Rao and sent to the Punjab by the Citizens for Democracy in May 1985. Their findings with a foreword by Justice V. M. Tarkunde was published a few months later. The book entitled *Report to the Nation: Oppression in Punjab* was promptly seized and banned by the government. On 10 September 1985 all the five researchers were arrested and charged with crimes under the National Security Act, Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1983 and Terrorists and Disruptive Activities Act 1985. The book was subsequently reprinted clandestinely in India and abroad and widely circulated. Its findings on incidents at the Golden Temple between 1 and 7 June 1984 were based on recorded statements made by Devinder Singh Duggal, Director of the Sikh Reference Library, whose appartment was alongside the library and overlooked the Temple, Bhan Singh, Secretary of the SGPC, Gyani Puran Singh, one of the priests of the Temple and many others. They are categorical in stating that: (a) Fire was opened by the CRPF soon after the noon of 1 June and

Two days later (8 June), President Zail Singh visited the Temple. The Prime Minister took care to send Arjun Singh and her personal secretary, R. K. Dhawan, to keep an eye on Zail Singh and to make sure that he did not say anything which might embarrass the government. Zail Singh was visibly shaken by what he saw. The bodies of women and children still floated in the sacred pool. Though frantic efforts had been made to clear the precincts of blood, the stench of death and cordite pervaded the atmosphere. He broke down and prayed for forgiveness. A sniper hidden in a neighbouring building tried to kill him but hit the security guard behind him. Mrs Gandhi also visited the

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continued for over seven hours without a single shot being fired from inside the complex. Amongst the eight killed were a woman and child; (b) Nothing untoward happened on 2 June. Curfew was lifted and pilgrims allowed to enter to participate in martyrdom day observances. The CRPF outside the Temple was replaced by the army on the night of 2 June; (c) The number of worshippers in the temple on the martyrdom anniversary (3 June) was about 10,000. This included a jatha of 1300 which had come to court arrest in the Dharam Yudh Morcā (including 200 women and 18 children). All these people stayed in the Temple complex in the Guru Ram Das serai, Teja Singh Samudri Hall or in the parikarma; (d) The army attacked the Temple complex without any prior warning; electricity was cut off slightly before 4 a.m. on 4 June; the first shells fell close to the Akal Takht. The army attacked from all sides. According to Duggal 'a helicopter hovered above and continued to fire from above. Some of these helicopters also guided the firing squads of the army by making a circle of light around the targets. Immediately after these circles, a cannon ball would sand on the target, causing havoc. We saw a large number of boys blown to pieces;' (e) There were about 50 men and women in the central shrine, Harimandir, of whom two were killed; (f) The real resistance began only after the army entered the Temple; Bhindranwale had 'only 100 people to fight and there were less than 100 arms consisting mostly of 303 rifles used in World War I, 315 guns and a few sten guns. When the army entered the ammunition was nearly exhausted. After midnight (morning of 6 June), at about 1 a.m. an armoured carrier and eight tanks came inside the complex;' (g) No damage had been done to the Research Library till the evening of 6 June, when Duggal left it. On his return on 14 June he saw it destroyed. He was asked to sign a receipt to the effect that he had taken charge of it. On his refusal to do so, he was arrested. (*Report to the Nation: Oppression in Punjab*, a reprint published in the USA).

Temple a few days later and was upset when she saw the extent of damage. She was not a big enough woman to admit that Blue Star had been a grievous error of judgement, a blunder for which she personally and the country generally would have to pay a heavy price for decades to come.

The government media and an almost entirely communally biased Hindu press did its utmost to justify the action, extol the heroism of the army for doing an unpleasant job with professional skill and vilify Bhindranwale and his associates in language unworthy of an allegedly free press. It was put out that the army had suffered heavy casualties because it refrained from returning fire from the Harimandir which had therefore remained undamaged and no one inside it had been hurt. People present there told a different tale: the shrine was splattered with bullets and at least one *ragi* (singer) was killed.[22] Stories were circulated that a large number of women, including prostitutes and foreign hippies, were found on the premises, of whom some women were pregnant; others presumably were able to avoid pregnancy because quantities of used condoms were found in the debris; so also stocks of opium, heroin and hashish. These stories made the front pages of most newspapers: corrections issued later that hippies and narcotics were not found in the Temple complex but outside it received scant publicity. Attempts to further tarnish the image of Bhindranwale were equally clumsy. It was put out that he had been slain by his own men.[23] Since no self-respecting Sikh could be found to give the government a clean chit, frightened rustics were hauled up before TV

22 In his interview given a week after the action, General K. S. Brar maintained that the army suffered heavy casualties because it was forbidden to return extremist fire coming from the Harimandir. More than a hundred fresh bullet marks seen on the Harimandir cast serious doubt on this official version: either there were no extremists in the Harimandir and the bullet marks were caused by crossfire or, if they were there, the army must have returned their fire. See Chopra, *Agony of the Punjab*, pp. 28–33.

23 The *Hindustan Times* (8 June 1984) boldly front-paged M. K. Dhar's version taken 'from the most reliable sources' that Bhindranwale had taken his own life.

cameras and made to repeat statements prepared for them. The head priest of the Akal Takht, Jathedar Kirpal Singh, was made to read a statement placed in his hands that the damage caused was minimal.[24]

The entire Sikh community was outraged by the action and expressed its anger in whatever manner it could. At eight cantonments in different parts of India, over 4000 Sikh soldiers deserted their regiments, slew their officers and tried to get to Amritsar. They were intercepted by the local police and the army; in the clashes scores of men were slain on either side and the remaining deserters captured. Two Sikh members of the Lok Sabha, including Amarinder Singh of Patiala, and both belonging to Mrs Gandhi's party, put in their resignations from Parliament and the Congress party. So did several members of the Punjab legislature. A Sikh diplomat in Norway asked for political asylum; a senior police officer, Simranjit Singh Mann, posted in Maharashtra, enclosed with his letter of resignation offensive memos to the President and Prime Minister, and went underground. He was later captured trying to cross over to Nepal and kept under detention without trial.[25] Several distinguished men of letters, including the historian Ganda Singh, Sadhu Singh Hamdard, the editor of *Ajit*, and Bhagat Puran Singh, popularly known as Punjab's bearded Mother Teresa because of his lifelong service to lepers and destitudes, returned honours that the government had bestowed on them.

A month after Operation Blue Star, and after several postponements, the government published on 10 July its version of events that led to it in the form of a *White Paper on the Punjab*

24 Virtually the only two 'respectable Sikhs' the government media could find to support the army action were both aspirants for Governors' posts. One was the ever-accommodating Dr Gopal Singh Dardi, the other, Professor Harbans Singh. Dardi was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Goa, Daman and Diu. The professor's family was more than adequately compensated by being given the contract to rebuild the Akal Takht on its own terms.

25 The government tried to implicate Mann in Mrs Gandhi's murder. When in detention in Bhagalpur jail, Mann was elected President of the Akali Dal.

Agitation.[26] Apart from the one sided narration, it had many factual inaccuracies. Its main theme was that the Akali agitation generated Bhindranwale's terrorism and, since the Akalis could not control it, the government had no option but to stamp it out. As a matter of fact, Bhindranwale's terrorism began much earlier, with his clash with the Nirankaris on 13 April 1978. The murders of the Nirankari, Baba Gurbachan Singh, and Lala Jagat Narain; the sabotage of rail tracks, the hijacking of two Indian Airlines planes, attempts on the life of Chief Minister Darbara Singh and the killing of several Sant Nirankaris, all took place before the Akalis Dharam Yudh Morcā began on 4 August 1982.

The *White Paper* put the entire responsibility for Bhindranwale's misdeeds on the Akalis without mentioning the government's role in building him up, releasing him after charging him with murder and letting him go about cities like Bombay and Delhi with his band of armed desperadoes without questioning them, besides conniving at arms being smuggled into the Temple in trucks carrying groceries for the kitchen.[27]

26 On 14 July 1983 H. S. Surjeet and other opposition MPs had asked the government to publish a *White Paper* on the Punjab in the Consultative Committee of Parliament. The government turned down the demand. In its annexure, apart from mentioning 52 Chinese-made and Russian Kaiashnikov assault rifles, the *While Paper* avoids naming the countries of manufacture of self-loading rifles and light machine guns alleged to have been seized after the operation. This for the simple reason that they were of Indian manufacture. A glaring omission was of the medium machine guns said to have been captured. They were apparently stolen some months earlier from an army depot. There is no reference to how arms were smuggled into the country and then into the Temple complex, apart from the bland statement that they were 'taken in *Kar Seva* trucks'. Thus, both the BSF and the CRPF cordoning the Temple complex were let off the hook.

The *White Paper* has several pictures of doors and windows bricked up leaving apertures for guns. Amongst them is one of a private house, outside the Temple complex, which was fortified by the Border Security Force.

27 P. S. Bhinder, IG of Police, admitted that trucks carrying provisions for the Temple kitchen were not searched as he had received oral instructions from 'the top,' *ooper sey* (Indianization of 'higher authorities'), *The Punjab Crisis*, p. 230.

The government spokesman had often mentioned the 'foreign hand' (clearly meaning Pakistan or the United States—or both) in the supply of arms and training facilities to terrorists, as well as camps set up by them in Jammu and Kashmir. The *White Paper,* too, stated that 'the government has reasons to believe that the terrorists were receiving different kinds of active support from certain foreign sources.'[28] It referred to a Sikh extremist group in Canada which had hired one Johan Vanderhorst to train Sikhs in the use of firearms. The sole source of information quoted for this was a report in *The Vancouver Sun.* The most glaring inaccuracy was the *White Paper*'s estimate of human casualties and the damage to sacred property. According to it, the 'civilian-terrorists' killed numbered 554 and 121 injured. Army casualties were put down as 92 killed (including 4 officers and 4 JCOs) and 287 injured. Some days after the event Rajiv Gandhi, speaking at Nagpur, gave the figure of army casualties as over 700 dead. (He subsequently retracted his statement.) By that reckoning, the number of 'civilian-terrorist' casualties was probably also seven times the figure given by the *White Paper.* Most eyewitness accounts put their number between 1500 and 5000, mostly innocent pilgrims, including women and children.[29] The government never bothered to publish the names of those killed, nor anything to refute the damning evidence that quite a large number of those captured were executed in cold blood.[30]

28 Mrs Gandhi had been talking of the foreign hand in the Punjab (and Assam) trouble since 1972. The *White Paper* mentioned 'foreign forces' and 'external support'. Having made the charge it stated that it was not in the public interest to divulge the details. Governor B. D. Pandey said on 15 December 1983 that there was no evidence of foreign interference in the Punjab's affairs.

29 Kuldip Nayar records that 'nearly 100 devotees, including 35 women and 10 children lost their lives,' *Tragedy of Punjab,* p. 102. The *New York Times* puts the number of killed at 1200 (17 October 1984), the *Chicago Tribune* at 2000 (12 June 1984).

30 Brahma Chellani of Associated Press, who happened to elude the army and police dragnet was able to produce post mortem reports of men 'shot at point-blank range by troops who first tied their hands behind their

The government maintained that no damage was done to the Harimandir. Journalists who were allowed to visit the Temple a few days after Operation Blue Star counted hundreds of fresh bullet marks in the gold-leaf and marble.[31] The government maintained that the Temple archives, which housed hundreds of rare handwritten copies of the Granth and *hukumnamahs* bearing the signatures of the Gurus, had caught fire during the fighting. D. S. Duggal, keeper of the archives, was categorical that it was after the fighting had stopped that troops set fire to the archives under the impression that the manuscripts were probably account books of the Temple. By then they had broken open the offices of the SGPC, the Akali Dal and the Istri Akali and taken whatever valuables they could find and set the rest on fire. There are over a dozen shrines in the complex, each with its *golak* (metal pitcher for putting in coins and currency notes). Not one was found after the army action. The Temple kitchen which catered to thousands of pilgrims every day was robbed of every utensil. Amongst the invaluable, irreplaceable treasures lost was a gem-studded canopy sent by the Nizam of Hyderabad

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backs.' This report was published in *The Times* of London on 14 June 1984. A warrant of arrest was issued against Chellani.

The Peoples Council for Civil Liberties, *Black Laws* (p. 57) has an equally damning indictment: 'During the army action at the Golden Temple, there were many cases of indiscriminate killing of ordinary people including unnamed women and children. The post mortem reports state that some of those killed had their hands tied behind their backs. These killings include 16 sewadars of Baba Kharak Singh from Gurdwara Dera Baba Sham Singh. In 50 wards from the Golden Temple, Baba Kharak Singh is a revered *sant* and a pacifist. On 7 June, sixteen of his men, including the 70 year old Joginder Singh and 18 year old Hardev Singh were pulled out from the Dera, their hands tied behind their backs, made to walk through the streets of Atta Mandi Bazar, and were shot dead opposite the DCM shop by BSF personnel. Soldiers belonging to the Bihar regiment and the BSF also looted the store of the Dera and decamped with things worth Rs 70,000 and ½kg. of gold. This was reported to us by the *granthi* of the gurdwara. The report of the looting and killing was confirmed by an eyewitness.'

31 Kuldip Nayar counted 'at least 300 bullet marks. One "*bir*" (Granth) was hit by a bullet.'

to Maharajah Ranjit Singh and presented by the Maharajah to the Golden Temple. The *White Paper* was roundly criticized by all opposition parties. Atal Behari Vajpayee, President of the BJP, who had lauded the army action, observed that 'it evaded more issues than it tackled.' *India Today* referred to it as 'Operation White-Wash'.[32]

Accounts of the army's behaviour after the fighting was over made sorry reading. At the time when temperatures were in the soaring 120 degrees, prisoners (described officially as 'the enemy') were denied drinking water; many were made to crawl on their bellies on hot tarmac; soldiers went about the sacred premises with their shoes on, and drank rum and smoked cigarettes to soothe their overwrought nerves. A month after the operation there was still a notice board outside the debris of the Akal Takht asking soldiers to desist from drinking and smoking on the premises.

The real question that the *White Paper* did not answer was whether there was no way of getting at Bhindranwale and his men other than an assault on the Temple with tanks and artillery. A look at the map of the Temple complex would make it clear that there were many alternatives. There are three main entrances: two from the northern side—one overlooking the clock tower and the other leading to the kitchen serai and offices of the SGPC—the third less frequented one is on the southern side. Besides these, there are narrow inlets largely used by people living in neighbouring streets. Every one of them had been guarded by armed police and paramilitary forces for several months before the operation. The Akal Takht stands clearly away from other temple buildings on the western end, with its rear end abutting a narrow bazar. By all accounts Bhindranwale had no more than 300–400 men in arms at his disposal. Most of the time he had fewer than a dozen bodyguards with him when he received visitors and press-men. A determined body of commandos in plain clothes could have overpowered them with minimum loss of life. The Akal Takht could have been cordoned off, deprived

32 *India Today*, 31 July 1984.

of drinking water and rations and its inmates gassed into submission.[33] But the government, for reasons best known to it, first let leaders of the ruling party help Bhindranwale to build himself into a leader, allowed its police and paramilitary forces to turn a blind eye to the smuggling of arms into the temple and then ordered its army to storm it with tanks and heavy guns. Sikhs could be forgiven if they came to the conclusion that Mrs Gandhi's government meant to give their community a bloody punch on the nose. They were not likely to forget or forgive anyone who had anything to do with Operation Blue Star.

Sikhs all over the world held prayers in their gurdwaras to mark the desecration of their Temple by the army. Massive demonstrations were organized in front of Indian embassies and consulates outside India. In many parts of India protesters clashed with the police, resulting in loss of lives.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi talked of the need for applying a healing touch to the Punjab and asked the people not to look upon the Sikhs as suspects. She also appealed to the Sikhs not to entertain any ideas of separatism.[34] How the healing touch was applied was a different story: Sikhs came to be treated as suspects, harassed and discriminated against. The government was armed with laws which enabled the police and minor civil servants to arrest people without warrants and hold them in detention without trial; those detained were deprived of their right to be represented by counsel, move writs of habeas corpus and were presumed to be guilty unless they proved their innocence. Special courts were set up in different towns in the Punjab

33 The Indian army could have learnt some lessons in how to overcome groups of terrorists from the Israelis and the Germans who were able to rescue hostages several thousand miles away from their country. In May 1988 when there was a similar build up of arms by terrorists in the Golden Temple, police sharpshooters forced 200 of them to surrender without entering the Temple. Only two terrorists were killed and one committed suicide in this operation named Black Thunder.

34 Speech at Srinagar (Garhwhal) on 25 June 1984 reported by the UNI

with powers to conduct trials *in camera* and deal out summary justice with no right to appeal.[35] Since the army was ordered to stamp out terrorism it went about doing so in another operation it named Woodrose. Village after village was surrounded, the houses of Sikhs (never Hindus) were searched for arms, Sikh young men taken for questioning, beaten up and tortured. Criticism of the behaviour of the army was construed as an act of sedition. Amongst people charged and declared absconders and arrested were retired army officers.[36]

Human rights organizations like the Peoples Union for Civil Liberties headed by retired Justice V. M. Tarkunde carried out a survey of how ordinances and repressive laws were enforced in the Punjab. The most glaring instance of miscarriage of justice was the fate of 379 men, women and children arrested in the Golden Temple complex during Operation Blue Star.[37]

35 Amongst the list of draconian ordinances that were passed into acts were the Maintainance of Internal Security Act (MISA) of 1971; for the Punjab a special law was enacted entitled the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act of 1985.

36 Ibid., p. 69. In Union Territory of Chandigarh vs Maj.-Gen. Narinder Singh, Brig. Joginder Singh Dhillon and Navrang Singh were charged with sedition. In the FIR no. 460/84 dated 15 July 1984 registered at PS East Chandigarh, the accused were said to have made provocative speeches. The FIR however shows that while the accused criticized the army action and complained about how army soldiers robbed some persons, there was nothing incendiary in their remarks. Worse still, the executive magistrate, Chandigarh issued a proclamation on 17 December 1984 declaring 'Joginder Singh Dhillon has absconded or is concealing himself', and demanding his presence by 30 January 1985 in his court. Similar proclamations were issued against the other two co-accused. This, despite the fact that all three were present in Chandigarh at their residences.

37 Amongst them was a woman, Inderjeet Kaur (35), the mother of four children who lived in a bazaar close by the Temple and, like many others, started her morning with prayer at the Temple. She, like all others, was picked up from the Golden Temple, detained under the National Security Act and given a cyclostyled copy of her grounds of arrest and a confession which she had to sign. The confession ran as follows; 'Stated that I am a resident of Atta Mandi, Amritsar and I am a member of All-India Sikh Students Federation and Dal Khalsa. Bhai Amrik Singh was President of these organizations. These organizations were associated with Sant

Far from stamping out terrorism and the feeling of separatism, operations Blue Star and Woodrose engendered feelings of alienation and induced hundreds of young Sikh men and women to turn into terrorists. Many of those who were able to elude the army dragnet crossed the border into Pakistan and made it a base for their operations. They returned with sophisticated arms easily purchasable in Pakistan with money sent by sympathizers in England, Canada and the United States. They were able to perpetrate acts of terrorism because after the army's brutalities the peoples, sympathies were with them.

The illusion that Operation Blue Star had brought the Sikhs to heel and that they would be amenable to compromise with the government was soon dispelled. Sullen resentment produced a sense of unity in the community. By incarcerating Sant Longowal and Tohra, then Badal and Barnala, the government created a

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Bhindranwale and we all acted according to the dictates of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. In order to maintain the independent entity of Sikhs, our aim was to establish a separate state (Khalistan) with a separate constitution. In order to fulfil this mission we gathered lots of arms, ammunition, bombs and explosives from foreign countries. So that for the achievement of the Sikh state of Khalistan we should be able to strike the government. To fulfil this object 6000 persons were collected to whom arms training was imparted by retired Maj. Gen. Shahbheg Singh: who kept our objectives secret from the visitors to Darbar Sahib Amritsar and also the Government. On 5.6.84 the security forces deployed around Darbar Sahib gave us warning to come out of Darbar Sahib. About 120 persons came out of Darbar Sahib on their warning. We were in groups. Due to this firing the security forces continued upto 10.8.84. Following were the active members of our organization.

I and these persons participated vigorously. At last the security forces stopped us after entering into Darbar Sahib. Many of our workers were killed during the encounter with the army. The army seized lots of arms and ammunition from the vicinity of Darbar Sahib. Apart from this many Pakistan army officers conspired with us and fought against the government. The government with the help of army has destroyed Darbar Sahib by firing on it and killing the Sikhs. We will vindicate this by killing four for each Sikh killed. Even if we are released, we will again collect arms and with our supporters fight for making Khalistan a separate State.' *Black Laws 1984–85*, Peoples Union for Civil Liberties, Delhi, pp. 65–6.

vaccum in the Akali leadership; their places were filled by men who felt compelled to adopt even more aggressive postures towards the government. A month after the operation, they called on the Sikhs to organize *Shahidi Jathas* (martyr squads) and march to Amritsar to liberate the Golden Temple complex from the clutches of the army. They also announced that the Akal Takht would be retained in its damaged state as a memorial to what the Indian army had done to it.

The resurgent mood of belligerancy alarmed the government. Mrs Gandhi instructed Buta Singh to have the Akal Takht rebuilt in the quickest possible time. In the absence of the Akali leaders, the only people he could deal with were the High Priests of the Takhts. Even Gyani Kirpal Singh of the Akal Takht and Sahib Singh of the Harimandir, who had earlier given the army clean chits, sensed the resentment in the community and refused to oblige. Buta Singh approached Baba Kharak Singh, a venerated *sant* who had spent most of his life organizing voluntary service in gurdwaras. Kharak Singh rudely rebuffed Buta Singh and told him that he would undertake the *Kar Sewa* only if asked by the high priests to do so. Buta Singh tried to bypass the high priests by calling a *Sarbat Khalsa* and got Santa Singh Nihang,[38] head of the Buddha Dal, to take the lead. The government-sponsored Sarbat Khalsa was convened on 11 August 1984 with Santa Singh as President. Apart from Sikh members of the Congress party led by Darbara Singh, most of the others were peasants brought in on government transport for a free outing in Amritsar. Buta Singh utilized the occasion to condemn the Akalis. 'They have always misled the innocent Sikh masses and misused their facilities and funds,' he said.[39] Santa Singh pronounced an order of excommunication against Tohra.[40] The government also toyed with the idea of ammending the Sikh Gurdwaras Act to provide for a more amenable SGPC to manage

38 Santa Singh Nihang was an enormous man allegedly addicted to *bhang* (hashish), who styled himself as *Sultan-ul-Qaum*—ruler of the community.

39 *India Today*, 15 September 1984, p. 70.

40 *India Today*, 30 September 1984. p. 38.

the affairs of the Temple. The plan was abandoned and Buta Singh and Darbara Singh empowered to go ahead with the rebuilding of the Akal Takht. Apart from about 150 followers of Santa Singh Nihang, few Sikhs volunteered for service. Most of the work was entrusted to a contractor working under the supervision of the CPWD. The government contributed the gold required to cover the dome.'[41]

While the construction was going on the high priests summoned another Sarbat Khalsa. The Punjab government did its best to abort the move by putting up road blocks on approaches to Amritsar and issuing warnings to village headmen. Nevertheless, the attendance at this Sarbat Khalsa on 1 and 2 September 1984 was more than double that of the one convened by the government. At this assemblage President Zail Singh, Buta Singh and Santa Singh Nihang were declared *tankhayias*. It was also resolved that if the army did not clear out of the Temple complex by 1 October, shahidi jathas would move in to occupy it.

Mrs Gandhi relented. On 25 September 1984 she announced that the army would be withdrawn from the Temple. 'Now that the repairs are completed, even the token presence of the army in the Golden Temple can be withdrawn,' she said.[42] President Zail Singh was anxious to be present at the handing over ceremony and have the order of excommunication against him withdrawn. His emissary succeeded in getting round the head priest. His speech on the occasion was construed as an apology. 'I ask for sincere forgiveness from the Gurus for the unfortunate incidents,' he said.[43] Jathedar Kirpal of the Akal Takht could afford to be more militant in tone: 'If the government continues its anti-Sikh attitude and treats us like second class citizens, it will not only endanger the unity of the country, but also cause communal disharmony.' He demanded that the ban on the

41 The contractors were Messrs Skipper Construction Co., and Tejwant Singh, son of Professor Harbans Singh of the Bhai Vir Singh Sadan of New Delhi. Professor Singh had consistently supported the government.

42 *India Today*, 14 October 1984, p. 55.

43 Ibid., p. 58.

44 Ibid., p. 56.

AISSF be withdrawn, Akali pleaders be released, mass arrests of young Sikhs be stopped and compensation paid to families which had suffered in the army action.[44] The order of excommunication against President Zail Singh was withdrawn. Buta Singh was not as lucky. He had more at stake, as his constituency was predominantly Sikh and the elections were due in a few months. He did his best to bargain over the restoration of buildings belonging to the SGPC and the return of some suspicious items including Pakistani currency, but the high priests did not relent.

On 1 October 1984 the army withdrew from the Golden Temple. It did not hand over charge to the SGPC but to the high priests. The army action widened the gulf between the Hindus who had welcomed it and the Sikhs who had not, and gave the movement for Khalistan its first martyr in Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. India had to pay a very heavy price for the miscalculation, the heaviest being the assassination of the miscalculator, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

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22. Assassination and After

Anyone who knew anything about the Sikhs would have known that they were never likely to get the desecration of the Harimandir and the Akal Takht out of their minds; nor forgive anyone who had anything to do with it unless forgiveness was asked for. The spirit of vengeance and martyrdom remain deeply embedded in the Sikh pysche. There were many Sikhs in 1984 to prove that they had not changed. A large number of Bhindranwale's men had been able to get away when the army closed in on the Golden Temple; they knew full well that, if captured, no mercy would be shown to them and, if they committed more crimes, nothing worse could happen to them than being shot or hanged. There were many more who, when they saw the damage done to the Temple, swore oaths on the Holy Granth that they would kill the people who they thought were responsible for the desecration, or die in the attempt.[1] Their hit lists included President Zail Singh, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, her son and his family, the Chief of the Army Staff, General A. S. Vaidya[2], officers who took part in the storming of the Temple, and scores of others.

1 In July 1984 Brigadier Jagir Singh (retd.) was arrested at Delhi airport on charges of being a part of a conspiracy hatched in New York to murder Mrs Gandhi. When presented before the court on 1 August 1984, the Brigadier stated, 'I am involved in a fabricated case. They say I wanted to kill the Prime Minister.' (*India Today*, 31 August 1984, p. 55.) The accused was subsequently discharged.

2 General Vaidya was assassinated in Pune on 10 August 1986 by four gunmen. Responsibility for the crime was taken by the Khalsa Commando

This was common knowledge. Security precautions were tightened. All those who felt endangered were provided with bullet-proof vests and personal bodyguards. Amongst the most meticulously guarded was Mrs Gandhi. Her residence, 1 Safdar Jang Road and the house next door which had been converted into her personal secretariat were heavily patrolled at all times and every visitor had to go through metal detectors and body searches. An ambulance with bottles of blood of the requisite category and a doctor were always in attendance. Her security officers had advised her to remove Sikh guards from her residence; she had turned down the suggestion.[3]

On the morning of 31 October 1984, having finished her work at her house, she came out to go to the garden of her office to keep an appointment with a BBC television team. As she was about to pass through the opening in the hedge which divided the gardens of the two houses, two of her Sikh security guards opened fire on her and pumped eighteen bullets into her frail body. Other guards present fired on the assailants. Both were captured alive, but one, Beant Singh (38), was killed in a melee in the office he was taken to; the other, Satwant Singh (21), was badly injured and taken to hospital. Mrs Gandhi, accompanied by her Italian daughter-in-law, Sonia, was rushed to the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) about four kilometres away.

At the time of the shooting, President Zail Singh was on a state visit to North Yemen; Mrs Gandhi's son, Rajiv, was in Calcutta. The BBC announced the news of the attack at 10 a.m. (IST); All-India Radio waited another hour to do so. Mrs Gandhi died at 2 p.m. The news was flashed by the major broadcasting systems of the world; All-India Radio announced her death in its

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Force. The General had received several threats to his life. 'If a bullet is destined to get me it will come with my name written on it,' he is reported to have said. (*India Today*, 31 August 1986, p. 26.)

3 It would appear that Mrs Gandhi had premonitions of her death. The day before (30 October 1984) while canvassing votes for her party in Orissa she spoke of the possibility: 'If I die...'

six o'clock news. All national newspapers brought out special bulletins stating, as officially briefed, that the assailants were 'two Sikhs and one clean shaven Sikh.'[4]

After three years of communal killings in the Punjab, the murder of Mrs Gandhi was bound to have violent repercussions. Although the victims of killings in the Punjab included as many Sikhs as Hindus, since the killers were almost invariably Sikhs it was assumed that the entire community were to blame and deserved to be punished. What no doubt fueled this anti-Sikh feeling was the fact that hardly any Sikh leader of consequence had boldly spoken out against Bhindranwale or the killings of innocent Hindus by terrorist gangs.

By the afternoon of 31 October crowds had begun to collect around the AIIMS and rough up Sikhs found in the vicinity. President Zail Singh, who received the news of Mrs Gandhi's death while on his way to Delhi, drove straight from the airport to the AIIMS. After having paid homage to Mrs Gandhi, as the President was on his way to Rashtrapati Bhavan, his car was stoned by the mob. Without consulting ministers of the central cabinet, senior members of the Congress party or chief ministers of the states, President Zail Singh decided to swear in Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister of India.[5] Rajiv reconstituted his

4 It was a well-established convention of the Indian press not to divulge the religious affiliations of persons involved in communal killings. The mystery of the third person being a clean-shaven Sikh was never solved as only two men were caught red-handed. Three men, Satwant Singh, Kehr Singh and Balbir Singh (along with Beant Singh, deceased) were found guilty of the murder of Mrs Gandhi. All three were sentenced to death by the Additional Sessions Judge of Delhi, Mahesh Chandra. The sentences were confirmed on 3 December 1986 by a bench of the Delhi High Court consisting of Justices S. Ranganathan, B. N. Kirpal and M. K. Chawla. The judgement was based on the confession of Satwant Singh (later retracted), documentary evidence found on the person of Balbir Singh, corroborated by the evidence tended by Beant Singh's widow, Bimal Kaur Khalsa and a policeman. (*India Today*, 31 December 1986.)

5 Later in an interview with *Onlooker* magazine of Bombay, Zail Singh said that if he had appointed any of the three senior cabinet ministers, Pranab Mukherjee, P. V. Narasimha Rao or P. C. Sethi, there was 'every

cabinet, keeping the portfolios of Defence and External Affairs with himself.

A certain amount of spontaneous anti-Sikh violence should have been anticipated and easily contained by swift, stern action by the police. What followed Mrs Gandhi's assassination tells a sordid tale of administrative and political complicity in a massacre of innocents of dimensions not seen in India since it became an independent state.

From the AIIMS mobs fanned out to neighbouring localities. The police did nothing to check them. By sunset, Sikh-owned shops in New Delhi's main shopping centre, Connaught Circus, were being looted and set on fire. Huge crowds watched the scene; the police, which was present in large numbers, remained passive spectators. Taxis, trucks, three-wheelers and scooters driven by Sikhs were wrecked and set alight. Clouds of smoke billowed from different localities, the evening sky glowed like burning amber. It was evident that the city was going up in flames and unless the fire was doused quickly, it would engulf the entire city. Till then there were no reports of Sikhs being killed.

Neither the central government nor the Delhi administration showed much eagerness to grapple with the situation. It later transpired that the Delhi administration was taking orders from leaders of the local Congress party and that in other states where the Congress was in power the police had been instructed not to interfere: the Sikhs had to be taught a lesson they would not easily forget. The initial spontaneous outburst of anti-Sikh feeling was meticulously fanned into a vast conflagration which

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possibility of a split in the Congress party, which would not be in the interest of the country at that critical juncture and there was no other party to replace the Congress.' He added. 'I also wanted to repay a part of my debt to the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. I was, after all, a protégé of Panditji [Nehru] and Mrs Gandhi had appointed me first as Union Home Minister and then nominated me to the highest office in the land. Lastly, I thought Rajiv Gandhi had a modern mind, a clean public image and pleasant personality and was moreover, known all over the country and abroad. I thought he would steer the nation through the crisis it was facing.' (*Indian Express*, 18 February 1988.)

engulfed most of northern India. Apart from a few sporadic instances in Tamil Nadu, such violence was confined to states ruled by the Congress party and masterminded by local leaders which included some members of Parliament.

Operation 'Teach the Sikhs a lesson' was put in motion on the night of 31 October. First, rumours were set afloat that Sikhs were celebrating the murder of Mrs Gandhi by dancing the bhangra in the streets, illuminating their homes and distributing sweets.[6] This was followed by spreading stories that train-loads of Hindus murdered by Sikhs had arrived from the Punjab in Delhi. By midnight yet another rumour was floated that Sikhs had poisoned Delhi's drinking water.[7] Meanwhile, the government-controlled TV (Doordarshan) continuously showed pictures of Mrs Gandhi's body lying in state and a grief-stricken Rajiv Gandhi receiving visitors, with occasional shots of crowds yelling slogans: '*khoon ka budla khoon say lengey*'—we will avenge blood by blood and '*Indira Gandhi Zindabad*'—long live Indira Gandhi. Having prepared the ground, Congress party cadres commissioned trucks to bring in villagers from the outlying localities, armed them with iron rods and cans of gasoline. They were assured that the police would not interfere. It did not need much inducement to get young Jats, Gujjars and lower-caste Hindus to come and help themselves to whatever they could lay their hands on, of the belongings of the more affluent Sikhs. What motivated these lumpen elements was the promise of loot: killing, arson and rape were an additional bonus which also gave them justification for what they were doing. They showed neither anger nor grief at the slaying of the Prime Minister.

6 Investigations carried out by independent organizations could not establish a single instance of such celebrations anywhere in India. There were, however, celebrations by small groups in England, Canada and the United States.

7 According to the report prepared by the People's Union for Democratic Rights and the People's Union for Civil Liberties, the spreading of both those rumours confirmed independent evidence 'of policemen in vans touring certain localities and announcing through loud-speakers the arrival of the train and the poisoning of water.' (*Who Are The Guilty?* p. 2.)

There was little chance of the Sikhs putting up resistance. They formed barely 7.5 per cent of the population of Delhi compared to the 83 per cent of Hindus. And unlike the Muslims who lived in compact *mohallas* (localities) and had experience of communal rioting, Sikhs lived amongst Hindus without any fear of violence from them. Also unlike Muslims, who could not be identified at a distance, the distinct appearance of Sikh males made the aggressors' task much simpler. They also had to contend with Congress party workers armed with voters' list to direct rioters to Sikh homes, shops and other properties. So the killing of Sikhs began in right earnest from the morning of 1 November and continued unabated till Mrs Gandhi's funeral on the afternoon of 3 November. In Delhi almost a hundred Sikh gurdwaras were burnt and thousands of Sikh shops, homes and factories looted and gutted. Young Sikh women were gang-raped, and Sikhs, particularly those between the ages of 15 and 50, brutally murdered. Trains and buses were halted, and Sikh passengers dragged out and murdered. Amongst train casualties were scores of army officers in uniforms. The killings followed a set pattern. The victims were first bludgeoned with iron rods, then doused with petrol and set alight. In the later stages of the holocaust, a certain amount of finesse was added to the method of killing: the victim's hands were pinioned behind him and a burning motor tyre lowered around his neck like a flaming garland.[8]

It would be impossible to find out the exact number of Sikhs killed in those four days. Government-controlled media and handouts issued by official agencies first put the figure at under 400. It transpired that the number of Sikh women widowed in the first two days of the killings in Delhi alone, and who had sought shelter in refugee camps, exceeded 1000. Besides Delhi, pogroms against Sikhs had taken place in Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh; the worst hit were cities like Kanpur, Lucknow, Ranchi and Rourkela in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The figure of 10,000 Sikhs killed

8 There were several instances of Punjabi Hindus coming to the rescue of Sikhs. So did members of Hindu organizations like the BJP and the RSS.

(more than half of them in the capital) would not be an exaggeration.[9] The extent of damage to Sikh property was even more difficult to estimate as it included wrecking large establishments like three bottling plants belonging to Messrs Pure Drinks which were worth crores of rupees, to small shops and plants worth a few thousand. Over 50,000 Sikhs were lodged in refugee camps in Delhi. Between 20,000 to 30,000 Sikh families fled from their homes in different parts of India and migrated to the Punjab.

Could the general massacre of the Sikhs have been prevented? There can be little doubt that if the central government had wanted to do so it could have considerably minimized the loss of Sikh life and property. The new prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, who also had the Defence portfolio, was fully appraised of the extent of the violence taking place. On the evening of 31 October he called a meeting at which the Lt. Governor of Delhi, the Police Commissioner and M. L. Fotedar (a close confidant of the Gandhi family and later a member of Rajiv Gandhi's cabinet) were present. At this meeting 'a senior police officer expressed the view that the army should be called out as otherwise there would be a holocaust. No attention was paid to the view.'[10] The same evening the new Home Minister, P. V. Narasimha Rao, assured the BJP leader, Atal Behari Vajpayee that 'everything would be brought under control within a couple of hours.'[11] Over All-India Radio the Prime Minister appealed for peace but made no effort to see that it was heard; no curfew was imposed on the first night. Citizens who dared to brave their way to the President's and ministers' houses on the next morning (1 November) were assured that 'the army was about to be called and the curfew about to be reimposed.'[12] Section 144 of the IPC, which prohibits

9 Romesh Thapar, editor of *Seminar*, estimated the loss of Sikh life in Delhi as between 6000–8000, including 30 officers in uniform, 2000 trucks and taxis destroyed and property worth Rs 300 crores looted and burnt. (*Illustrated Weekly of India*, 23–9 December 1984, p. 12.)

10 *Who Are The Guilty?* p. 6.

11 The *Statesman*, 10 November 1984.

12 *Who Are The Guilty?* p. 6.

assemblies of four of more persons, was promulgated and curfew imposed on the afternoon of 1 November. Rampaging mobs ignored both orders and went about their nefarious tasks with complete impunity. The police stood by idly watching the scene or instigated mobs to violence and shared their loot. On 2 November, newspapers boldly announced that an indefinite curfew and 'shoot at sight' orders had been issued to the police and the army. No one was shot at sight, nor was the army deployed till 3 November and that, too, largely to provide security for the world statesmen who had come to attend Mrs Gandhi's funeral. By then Delhi's thirst for Sikh bloood had been slaked.

The government's behaviour after the worst was over brought it little credit. In his first public meeting on 19 November (Mrs Gandhi's birth anniversary, Rajiv Gandhi almost condoned the violence in one sentence 'when a mighty banyan tree falls, the earth beneath it is bound to shake.'[13] He did not have a word of sympathy for the families of the victims of the massacre. The only people punished were Lt. Governor P. G. Gavai, who was sent on leave, and the Commissioner of Police, who was suspended. The Home Minister and the Home Secretary whose job it was to oversee the maintainance of law and order in the country were in fact rewarded: Home Minister Narasimha Rao became the senior-most member of the cabinet; Home Secretary M. M. K. Wall was appointed Lt. Governor of Delhi.

The 1809 men arrested for these crimes were released on bail, or let off on the intercession of Congress party leaders. The government refused to institute an enquiry into the holocaust on the plea that it would prove counterproductive.[14] But there were people who felt that if crimes of this magnitude were swept under

13 The *Hindustan Times*, 20 November 1984.

14 In reply to the allegation made by K. P. Unnikrishnan, MP, that Congress (I) workers were involved in the killings, the Prime Minister replied: 'You have been perpetuating this canard with ulterior motives.' (*India Today*, 15 December 1984, p. 32.) When questioned on the subject by a correspondent of *India Today* during his election campaign in Amethi, he replied: 'We have asked the commissioner of police to go into the question and since the whole police outfit has been checked up they are

the carpet of oblivion they would begin to stink and encourage victims to take the law into their own hands. The first to take the lead in the matter were The People's Union for Democratic Rights and The People's Union for Civil Liberties. Information was gathered by volunteers of the Nagrik Ekta Manch from survivors of the carnage and eyewitnesses. Not one member of these originations was a Sikh. Their findings were published in November 1984 under the title *Who Are The Guilty?* After narrating the sequence of events they were bold enough to publish the names of politicians, policemen and others who had been identified by victims and eyewitnesses as instigators of the violence: they included a member of Rajiv Gandhi's cabinet, H. K. L. Bhagat and three members of Parliament, Jagdish Tytler (elevated to the ministry a few months later), Sajjan Kumar and Dharam Kumar Shastri. Other politicians included members of the Delhi Municipal Corporation,[15] members of the Metropolitan Council,[16] and a few youth leaders. Thirteen police officers were named for instigating mobs and sharing the loot; another 198 were named for participating in different crimes. It was a challenge thrown to the men named to take these organizations to court on charges of criminal libel. Not one dared to pick up the gauntlet. The government remained unimpressed.

Who Are The Guilty? was followed by another report published by a high powered non-official commission of enquiry[17] headed

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expected to do their job.' The journal did not buy this version and wrote: 'It is purely out of political compulsion that he refused to order a judicial enquiry into the communal riots in Delhi and other places as it might have led to the indictment of some members of his own party.'

15 Babu Ram Shashi, Mangat Ram Singal, Dr Ashok Kumar, Jagdish Chandra, Ishwar Singh.

16 Lalit Makan, Mahaindra and Sohan Lal Sood.

17 This was at the request of retired Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh, Mrs Tara Ali Baig, Dharma Vira (former principal private secretary to Pandit Nehru, cabinet secretary and governor), Miss C. B. Mutharnma (ex-ambassador), Bhagwan Sahay (ex-governor), H. D. Shourie (Director, Common Cause), L. P. Singh (ex-Home Secretary and governor), Soli Sorabji (ex-Solicitor General), Sukhjit Singh of Kapurthala and T. Swaminathan (ex-Cabinet Secretary and Chief Election Commissioner).

by a retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, S. M. Sikri. Its other members were Badruddin Tyabji; (ex-ambassador, Commonwealth Secretary and Vice Chancellor of Aligarh University), Rajeshwar Dayal (ex-Foreign Secretary, ambassador and a visiting Fellow at Oxford University), Govind Narain (ex-Home and Defence Secretary and governor), and T. C. A. Shrinivasvardan (ex-Home Secretary). The commission visited the sites of violence, examined victims, eyewitnesses and affidavits submitted to them. Despite repeated requests to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the Home Minister Narasimha Rao, both men refused to receive the commission.

The commission published its findings on 18 January 1985. It concluded that 'the brutal killing of Smt Indira Gandhi sparked off these atrocities. The remarkable pattern of the crimes committed, with some local variations, strongly suggest that at some stage the objective became to "teach the Sikhs a lesson." The avoidable and abysmal failure of the administration and the police; the instigation by dubious political elements; the equivocal role of the information media; and the inertia, apathy and indifference of the official machinery, all lead to the inferences that follow.' The inferences were that after 'the climate of violence and terrorism' built up in the Punjab and Delhi, the administration should have taken greater precautions to protect political personalities; that 'the time gap between the attempt on the person of the Prime Minister and the official announcement of her death, should have provided the administration with more than adequate notice for taking preventive measures against civil disorder and violence'; that 'no evidence of any sort has come to our notice that an attempt was made to enforce prohibitary orders either during the night of 31 October, or on the following morning.'[18] And so on.

The government refused to take notice of this commission's findings and continued to maintain in Parliament that an official judicial enquiry would only make the problem of the Sikhs of Delhi worse; and if there had to be such an enquiry it would be

18 Mishra Commission.

a part of a package deal with the Akali leaders—not with the nation's conscience, but as a part of give and take with a political party. Ultimately a commission of enquiry was conceded as a part of the accord (dealt with in the next chapter). The way it went about its task was obviously riot designed to identify the guilty but to cover up their crimes. Justice Ranganath Mishra of the Supreme Court, who was appointed as the one-man commission to look into the matter, knew full well that several prominent members of the ruling party, including some holding ministerial posts, had been named as instigators, and that the Prime Minister himself had shown marked reluctance to have them investigated.

The case of the victims was presented by the Citizens Justice Committee (CJC) headed by the retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, S. M. Sikri. The briefs were prepared by a team led by the retired Justice, V. M. Tarkunde, and presented before the Commission by one of India's leading lawyers, Soli Sorabji. The CJC submitted more than 6000 affidavits and over a hundred witnesses against politicians and policemen involved in instigating the anti-Sikh violence. The commission was empowered to appoint an independent investigating agency to assist it. It chose to appoint a junior superintendent of police to head this agency. Whereas the affidavits and testimonies provided by the CJC were subjected to cross examination, its request for copies of affidavits presented by those named were turned down and even the identities of those who had sworn them not disclosed. Not one officer of the Delhi administration was produced in the witness box. The request for submission of vital police reports summoned by the CJC was refused. An order for summoning nine senior officials responsible for the maintenance of law and order during the period was also turned down. The same police officers against whom allegations of intimidation and harassment had been made by the witnesses were entrusted the task of investigating the allegations. Ultimately, the CJC decided to withdraw from the commission. It presented a detailed memorandum giving its reasons for doing so. Said Justice Tarkunde: 'We did not feel there was any point in our participating any

more. This has been a one-sided investigation. We were never given a chance to participate in it as we had been promised.'[19]

The full text of the Mishra Commission report was not released to the public—only its estimate of the number of people killed and its strictures against the police. By implication it exonerated the ruling Congress party and politicians named in *Who Are The Guilty?* It recommended the appointment of other agencies to identify and prosecute people against whom charges had been laid. Till four years after the killing of thousands of Sikhs, not one person had been punished.

19 *India Today*, 30 April 1986, p. 53.

23. Elections and the Accord

The general election of December 1984 was fought by the Congress party on the issue of the integrity of the country. A massive propaganda campaign[1] was launched to convince the electorate that those who had killed Mrs Gandhi had meant to destroy India's unity and Mrs Gandhi had laid down her life to preserve it. Huge coloured posters depicting her body on a bier draped in a saffron sari were splashed all over the country; some showed Sikhs in uniform shooting at her. Other posters showed rolls of barbed wire alongside a slogan: 'Will the country's border finally be moved to your doorstep?' And beneath it was another slogan: 'India could be your vote away from unity or separatism.' Less subtle was one posed in the form of a question: 'Why should you feel uncomfortable riding in a taxi driven by a taxi driver who belongs to another state?'[2] If these slogans did not convey the message, those shouted by Rajiv Gandhi's supporters in his constituency against his Sikh sister-in-law Maneka (the widow of Sanjay Gandhi) were blunt and to the point:

Beti hai Sardar ki
Qaum hai ghaddar ki

(She is the daughter of a Sikh, She belongs to a race of traitors.)

1 According to many observers, the Congress party spent over Rs 300 crores on its election campaign. Advertising alone cost it Rs 13 crores. Advertisements in nine languages were prepared by a Bombay agency, Rediffusion. (*Illustrated Weekly of India*, 13 January 1985, p. 22.)

2 Ibid.

The chief vote-winner for the Congress party was the martyred *amma*—mother. Millions of bindis (dots worn on the forehead by Hindu women) showing a smiling Indira blessing her son were distributed free; cassettes of her speeches, mostly on the 'If I die today, every drop of my blood will invigorate the nation' theme were played at election meetings.[3] Then there were portraits of Rajiv Gandhi as the young, handsome, incorruptible and forward-looking prince who would sweep the dirt of politics from the land. He was 'Mr Clean' leading a band of youthful, dedicated men who would usher in the computer age and take India from its feudal backwardness into the twenty-first century.

No previous general election had been fought by the Congress party with as much professional skill, using modern techniques of marketing; nor was as much money spent by it as in this general election. It paid handsome dividends, generating a breeze which blew opposition off northern India's electoral platforms. The Congress party under Rajiv Gandhi carried nearly half the electorate of the country and captured 80 per cent of the seats in the Lok Sabha; 410 out of a total of 540. This was more than it had ever won under Prime Minister Nehru or Indira Gandhi. Rajiv Gandhi had indeed bettered expectations. However, it is worth noting that it was largely in states where anti-Sikh feeling was strong that the Congress won its most convincing victories; in other states like West Bengal, Assam, and in southern states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka where the electorate was largely unaware of the perfidies alleged to have been committed by the Sikhs, the opposition parties were able to hold their own.

In his first nation-wide broadcast on 5 January 1985 following his electoral triumph, Rajiv Gandhi said that he gave settlement of the Punjab problem 'top priority'. A day earlier he had

3 In a note alleged to have been written a day before her assassination, Mrs Gandhi wrote: 'If I die a violent death as some fear and a few are plotting, I know the violence will be in the thought and the action of the assassin, not in my dying for no hate is dark enough to overshadow the extent of my love for my country; no force strong enough to divert me from my purpose and my endeavour to take this country forward.' (*Unholy Terror*, p. 1.)

constituted a cabinet sub-committee comprising S. B. Chavan, P. V. Narasimha Rao and K. C. Pant to advise him on how to go about tackling it. Since elections in ten states had been scheduled for the first week of March, the sub-committee was not able to pay any attention to the Punjab till they were over. The Congress party's repeat performance in most states coincided with the Akali's impatience with the government's seeming indifference towards the Sikhs. On 7 March 1985 the Akali Dal and the S.G.P.C. issued an ultimatum to the government that, if a judicial enquiry into the killing of Sikhs in November 1984 was not instituted and their leaders not released by the first day of Baisakh (13 April), they would launch yet another agitation, to be known as 'genocide week'.[4]

Rajiv Gandhi did not want another confrontation with the Akalis. With two convincing electoral victories under his belt and no political hang-ups to cloud his vision, he got down to trying to solve the Punjab problem. His approach was completely different from that of his mother's. She had always kept her party's electoral prospects uppermost in her mind, was never in a hurry to settle any problem and usually averse to making any settlement which would give her political adversaries credit in the eyes of the people. Since the death of her favourite younger son and chosen successor, Sanjay Gandhi, in an air accident on 23 June 1980, she had become dithering and indecisive and found some excuse or the other to put off a settlement with the Akalis. As a result, moderates who had dealt with her government had steadily lost ground to the extremists led by Bhindranwale. Rajiv Gandhi reversed the policy and decided to build up a moderate Akali leadership in the expectation that it would be able to contend with the extremists.

4 The ad hoc convenor of the Akali Dal, Surjan Singh Thekedar, the acting head of the SGPC, Prem Singh Lalpura, the five head priests and ex-Justice Minister, Balbir Singh, held the posts in the absence of Akali leaders in jail. Atma Singh, senior vice-president of the SGPC (Talwandi faction) said 'the longer an overall settlement is delayed, the greater will be the danger of hard core elements assuming pre-eminence in the voice of the communists.' *India Today*, 15 February 1985.

The strategy adopted was to make gestures of goodwill towards the Akalis, watch their reactions and those of the community before deciding on the next step. On 12 March 1985 eight top Akali leaders, including Sant Longowal and Barnala (both moderates) and Talwandi (extremist) were released. Tohra and Badal stayed in jail. Two days later, Arjun Singh, who only a day earlier had been sworn in as Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, was appointed Governor of the Punjab. Thereafter it was Arjun Singh more than anyone else who advised the central government on the step-by-step approach to the problem. By then the cabinet sub-committee had toured the state and gauged the mood of the people. First, censorship on the Punjab press was relaxed; then army control over certain districts was withdrawn. On 11 April 1985 the government announced its willingness to institute a judicial enquiry into the November 1984 killings, it lifted the ban on the AISSF and agreed to review the cases of detainees. On the first day of Baisakh the initial batch of 53 were released and Rajiv Gandhi reiterated his resolve to settle the Punjab problem. On his first visit to the Punjab on 23 March 1985 at Hussainiwala he announced economic measures, including the setting up of a rail coach factory at Kapurthala, which would absorb about 20,000 skilled hands.

For a while the government watched how the Sikh masses would react to the Akali leaders. The general feeling was that they had disgraced Sikh traditions by tamely surrendering to the army. Since Sant Longowal had been President of the Akali Dal and dictator of the Dharam Yudh Morcā, the task of explaining what had transpired fell on his shoulders. He addressed meetings all over the state as well as in Delhi. He did not mince his words, criticizing the central government and the army and even praising Mrs Gandhi's assassins.[5] At the same time, he condemned terrorism, denounced secessionism and pleaded for harmony between Sikhs and Hindus. Punjabis who had lived through four years of fear and turbulence

5 *India Today*, 30 April 1985.

enthusiastically responded to his call. The extremists found themselves being pushed out of the mainstream. On 25 March 1985, half of Talwandi's supporters deserted him and en bloc joined Longowal's group. After the eclipse of Talwandi, the government released Tohra on 19 April and, a few days later, Badal. Now it could watch which of the three it should deal with.

Tohra, who had been President of the SGPC for thirteen years, was known to harbour pro-Khalistani sympathies. His reputation was at its lowest and the best he could do on arriving at the Golden Temple in front of a hostile congregation was to announce that the Akal Takht rebuilt by the 'impious' hands of Baba Santa Singh Nihang and Buta Singh, both of whom had been declared tankhaiyas, with the help of the CPWD, would be demolished to be rebuilt through genuine kar seva—voluntary service. He hoped this would refurbish his image. Not much attention was paid to the suggestion at the time and, six months later, it was the extremists of the AISSF that took the initiative out of his hands to begin the work of demolition and rebuilding. Tohra, for the time being, decided to ride the Longowal bandwagon. Badal, still undecided on the line to take, expressed support for Sant Longowal.

Talwandi made an abortive attempt at a coup to capture the Akali Dal by getting Baba Joginder Singh, the octogenarian father of Bhindranwale to take over the party. With him was Bimal Kaur Khalsa, the widow of one of Mrs Gandhi's assassins, Beant Singh. In the name of Panthic unity the Baba asked Akali Dal office holders to submit their resignations to him and proceeded to reconstitute its executive committee in which he gave extremists predominance over the moderates. Sant Longowal promptly put in his resignation and announced his retirement from politics and returned to his village. The gamble paid off. Senior leaders of the party, including former members of the Central and State legislatures, went to his village retreat and persuaded him to return to the helm of affairs. Talwandi and his aged pawn were effectively checkmated. On 14 May 1985 they set up a rival United Akali Dal (UAD)

which became an umbrella organization of extremists, including Khalistanis, the AISSF and sundry gangs of terrorists.[6] The confrontation proved that the Sikh masses had more confidence in the moderates led by Sant Longowal than in the extremists.

Governor Arjun Singh, who had sounded Longowal, Tohra and Badal, correctly assessed that the man he should deal with was Sant Longowal.[7] Following his (the Governor's) advice, the central government proceeded to build up the Sant's credibility with his people. On 27 June, it announced that Justice R. N. Mishra of the Supreme Court would investigate the anti-Sikh violence of November 1984. Governor Arjun Singh began to release Sikh detainees. By mid-July over 1700 were freed.

Resuming a dialogue with the Akalis was a tricky business, as experience had proved that anyone known to deal with the governnment was promptly denounced as an agent. The opening move was made on 2 July 1985 by Rajiv Gandhi sending a secret and confidential letter to Sant Longowal on the feasibility of reopening negotiations. Only a handful of people were made privy to this move. On his side, Sant Longowal sounded senior Akali leaders. Tohra and Badal counselled caution; Barnala and Balwant advised him to go ahead. Caught in conflicting advice, the devout Sant turned for guidance to the Holy Granth. After

6 Tohra admitted his difficulties. He said: 'How can we control the Punjab youth when we have nothing to offer them? The government can strengthen our hands by conceding the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, abolishing Special Courts and withdrawing the Disturbed Areas Act before any talks.' (To a correspondent of *India Today*, 15 May 1985. p. 20.)

7 Communication with Sant Longowal who was lodged in a guest house in Udaipur was established. The Sant had refused to meet Buta Singh in the second week of November because he had been declared a tankhaiya, but he received Ravi Inder Singh, ex-Speaker of the Punjab Assembly, and Narendra Singh of Nabha. He also received R. V. Subramaniam, senior adviser to the Punjab governor, the first official to meet him after his arrest. All three reported that the Sant was not against reopening a dialogue with the government.

prayer he took the *Vaak*.[8] It was a hymn of Guru Arjun to the effect that a true Sikh should not be in two minds since the Guru was his guide. The Sant agreed to meet the Prime Minister in Delhi on 23 July 1985.

Both parties realized that, in order to succeed, utmost secrecy had to be maintained and politicians likely to raise obstacles should be kept out and presented with a fait accompli. On his side, the Prime Minister chose Governor Arjun Singh as his only confidant. The meetings were fixed for days when President Zail Singh would be away from Delhi. Minister Buta Singh and ex-Chief Minister Darbara Singh were kept in the dark. Bhajan Lal, Chief Minister of Haryana, was instructed to keep himself available. His potential for mischief was temporarily curbed by presenting him with a list of charges of corruption levelled against him. The chief minister of Rajasthan was not consulted. The Sant likewise chose to ignore Tohra and Badal and rely on the counsels of Barnala and Balwant Singh.

Sant Longowal's two advisers were flown into Delhi at night and returned before dawn to Chandigarh. On 23 July 1985, the Sant met the Prime Minister. By then all points of dispute had been amicably resolved. The next morning, 24 July 1985, the two men put their signatures to an eleven-point memorandum,[9] covering all the major issues which had defied solution since the Akalis had first presented their list of demands. The spirit of accommodation was evident on both sides. Five of the eleven points of settlement had nothing to do with the Akali's original charter of demands; three were concerned with religious, cultural and linguistic matters, most of which had already been conceded by Mrs Gandhi; only the remaining three dealt with substantial issues like territorial, adjustments and the distribution of river waters. It is significant that a similar accord could

8 *Vaak* (word)—a practice common among many communities, consists of opening a holy book (in the case of Muslims, the works of Hafiz) and reading a message from the first lines in the left page. The vaak in this case was *Dubidha chadd, guru terey ang sang*: shed double-mindedness, the Guru is with you. (The *Tribune*, 26 July 1983.)

9 See Appendix.

have been signed two years earlier if Mrs Gandhi had not changed her mind at the last minute. The accord signed by Sant Longowal and Rajiv Gandhi cleared a point that as far as the moderate Akalis were concerned, they never construed the Anandpur Sahib Resolution as a demand for secession or separatism but only for greater autonomy of the Punjab. They readily agreed to submit the resolution to the Sarkaria Commission.

Inevitably, leaders who had not been taken into confidence in the negotiations felt left out and humiliated: chief among them were Tohra and Badal on the Akali side, Buta Singh and Darbara Singh on the side of the government. Sant Longowal decided to take the issue to the Sikh masses. Before a vast assemblage convened at Anandpur on 26 July 1985 he presented the accord to the district party leaders for acceptance or rejection. It was accepted with acclamation.[10] But Tohra and Badal refused to be reconciled and described it as a sell-out. On the government side, Buta Singh and Darbara Singh bided their time to throw in a spanner.

Rajiv Gandhi took another bold step by announcing that, despite continuing terrorism, Punjab would go to the polls in the third week of September. The extremists, led by the UAD, called for a boycott of the elections. Not many people heeded their call. In sheer desperation they decided to eliminate the man who had robbed them of all credibility. On 21 August 1985, while seated in front of the Granth in a crowded village gurdwara, a gang of terrorists shot Sant Harchand Singh Longowal dead.

The Election of 1985

The September 1985 election in the Punjab for the 13 parliamentary and 117 assembly seats deserves close scrutiny as it was more in the nature of a referendum on the accord than a contest between political parties. What made it more interesting was

10 A public-opinion survey of Punjabi response to the accord was carried out by the *Times of India*. It showed that 81 per cent of those asked approved of it: 11 per cent disapproved; 11 per cent had nothing to say.

that the two major contestants for power, the Akali Dal and the Congress, were both in favour of the accord and condemned terrorism. The Akalis had their martyr in Sant Longowal; the Congress discreetly avoided any references to Mrs Gandhi's martyrdom. Their manifestos were largely devoted to plans for economic regeneration which were also along the same lines, rather than on their political differences. Even more surprising was the fact that though the Akali Dal gained an almost two-third majority in the State Assembly, this was more due to the vagaries of the electoral system than to any significant shift in the power bases of the Akali Dal, the Congress or the two Communists parties; only the right-wing, largely Hindu party the Jan Sangh, renamed the Bharatiya Janata Party, was almost wiped out of existence.

For the first time in its political career the Akali Dal entered the fray as a regional rather than an exclusively religious party. Among the candidates it fielded were six Hindus, one Muslim and one Christian. The UAD's call for a boycott was ignored even by its own supporters. Among those who entered the fray was Bimal Kaur Khalsa, who filed her nomination papers from two constituencies. The number of candidates per seat was higher than ever before, making a total of 832, including 30 women. There were 74 candidates including 6 women for the 13 Lok Sabha seats. The turnout of voters (almost 67 per cent) was also higher than in previous elections.

The events of the preceding four years, beginning with Bhindranwale's fulminations against the Hindus and the 'Hindu government' at the centre, then Operation Blue Star followed by Operation Woodrose, Mrs Gandhi's assassination, and the widespread anti-Sikh violence that resulted, had undoubtedly widened the chasm between the two communities and it was assumed that most Sikhs including the urban and the scheduled caste would vote for Akalis and most Hindus would vote for Congress or BJP. That was not how it turned out to be. A substantial number of Sikhs voted for the Congress and a large number of Hindus who voted Congress for the parliamentary seats voted for Akali Dal candidates in the State Assembly.

The results were more flattering to the Akalis than the percentage of votes cast for them. For the 13 Lok Sabha seats they fielded 11 candidates of whom 7 were successful. The Congress, which contested all the 13 seats, won the remaining 6. But the Akalis won their 7 seats with a turnout of 37.18 per cent of the votes, whereas the Congress won only 6 with a turnout of 41.53 per cent of the votes. The results of the State Assembly were equally surprising. Of the total of 115 seats contested (two were countermanded thanks to the deaths of candidates) the Akalis contested 100 and won 73 on a 38.55 percentage of votes, whereas the Congress, which contested all of them and got a marginally lower percentage (37.86), won only 32 seats. It was obvious that there was no significant switch over of political loyalties from the Congress to the Akali party: had a mere one per cent more voted for the Congress instead of the Akalis, the outcome would have been very different. What perhaps accounted for the change was that, while the Akalis were able to consolidate Sikh votes including the urban and scheduled caste, which in the past had gone to the Congress, the Congress was unable to win over all the Hindu votes which had usually gone to the BJP.

Secular parties like the CPI, and the CPM were even unluckier that the Congress: though between them they were able to poll their usual nearly 6 per cent of the vote, they returned only one member to the State Assembly. A new phenomenon that surfaced during this election was the Bahujan Sewak Samaj,[11] an organization of scheduled castes and backward classes which form 26.87 of Punjab's population. Their religious identity remained a matter of speculation as at different times and localities they described themselves as Hindus or Sikhs as it suited them. The Samaj put up 50 candidates for the State Assembly. Though none were successful they polled a substantial number

11 The Samaj was the political wing of the Dalit Soshit Samaj Samiti set up by Shiv Kanshi Nath on 6 December 1984. It has gained a considerable following among the lower castes in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal, Rajasthan and western Uttar Pradesh.

of votes in the Doaba region and probably affected the fortunes of some of the candidates of the other parties.

River Waters

An issue that has bedeviled the relationship between the Punjab and its neighbouring states and come on top of the list of the Akali's grievances against the central government is the distribution of river waters. After India was partitioned in 1947, the governments of Pakistan and India approached the World Bank to adjudicate and assist them in utilizing the waters of the Indus Basin. On 29 January 1955 the Indian government submitted the requirements of the three states concerned on its side of the dividing line; Punjab (which then included Haryana and Himachal), Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir. In 1960 the Indus Waters Treaty was signed by the governments of Pakistan and India. By this treaty the waters of the three western rivers—the Indus, the Jhelum and the Chenab—went exclusively to Pakistan; those of the three eastern rivers—the Sutlej, the Beas and the Ravi—were given to India, for which India paid Pakistan Rs 110 crores. When it came to allocating India's share between the states concerned, the Punjab government represented that the data presented to the World Bank had been hurriedly put together and did not represent the factual position. A committee of experts submitted fresh figures (February 1966), but its findings became academic as later that year Haryana and Himachal were made separate states. It was accepted as a principle that the assets of the joint Punjab would be divided in the ratio of 60 per cent to the Punjab and 40 per cent to Haryana. This was not acceptable to Haryana as the basis of the allocation of river waters. On the other hand, Punjab claimed that, being the only riparian state, it was entitled to take all it needed and part only with what remained as surplus to other states. This was untenable, as by the Indus Waters Treaty it was India, and not the Punjab, that was recognized as riparian of the three rivers; Rajasthan had, in any case, been taking the waters of the Sutlej long before the treaty. Several attempts were made between

1966 and 1975 to get Punjab and Haryana to agree to some formula of division. When they failed, the Central Government announced on 24 March 1976 that the available river water would be equally divided between Punjab and Haryana, with a little going to augment Delhi's drinking water requirements. Neither state was happy with this decision.

Ultimately, Mrs Gandhi, taking advantage of the emergency that she had imposed, gave an award more or less based on the decision taken by the government a year earlier. She claimed the right to adjudicate as the Punjab Reorganization Act of 1966 empowered the central government to do so if the states failed to arrive at an agreement. Zail Singh, Chief Minister of Punjab, protested but was bluntly told to accept the award or resign. He chose to stay.

The award required the laying of a 214 km long Sutlej-Yamuna link (SYL) canal, of which 122 km had to be dug in the Punjab and the remaining 92 km in Haryana.

The scene changed as Mrs Gandhi and her party were swept out of power in the 1977 elections. In both the Punjab and Haryana the Janata party formed governments and their chief ministers accepted the 1976 award. The link canal was to be jointly inaugurated by Badal and Devi Lal. Badal accepted Rs 1 crore for the Punjab as an initial grant from Haryana. Then both Chief Ministers had second thoughts on the subject and submitted the dispute to the Supreme Court.

Mrs Gandhi returned to power in 1980. She instructed the new chief ministers of the Punjab (Darbara Singh) and Haryana (Bhajan Lal) to withdraw their cases from the Supreme Court and on 31 December 1981 announced an award dividing the estimated total of 17.7 MAF as follows: 4.22 to the Punjab, 3.5 MAF to Haryana, 8.6 MAF to Rajasthan, 0.65 MAF to Jammu and Kashmir and 0.20 MAF to Delhi. She then proceeded to inaugurate the SYL canal at Kapuri (Patiala district).

The Akalis promptly retaliated by the Nahar Roko (stop the canal) agitation. It did not catch on. It did not lie in the mouths of the Akalis to raise objections against a settlement made by

an Akali Janata chief minister. The issue was once again put in abeyance and later formed a part of the accord signed between the President of the Akali Dal, Sant Longowal (who ironically enough had been dictator of the morcā, including Nahar Roko), and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on 24 July 1985. Under this accord 'the farmers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan will continue to get water not less than what they are using from the Ravi-Beas system as on the 1 July 1985. The claims of Punjab and Haryana regarding their remaining water will be referred for adjudication to a tribunal to be presided over by a Supreme Court judge. The decision of this tribunal will be rendered within six months and would be binding on both parties.'[12]

The distribution of river waters is likely to remain a subject of contention between the states. Neither the Punjab nor Haryana will get enough to meet the requirements of the multiple cropping pattern of agriculture they have embarked on. Paddy, cane and potato need large quantities of water at times when chemical fertilizers are put in the soil. So far the farmers of both states have augmented their resources by boring tube-wells. But canal water is much cheaper than tube-well water and the sub-soil water in both states has been steadily going down, adding to the farmer's expenses.

Accord Unstuck

On 27 September 1985 Barnala was sworn in as Chief Minister amidst much fanfare and hopes of lasting peace in the Punjab. His was the first Akali ministry not reliant on any other political party: with some justification he described it as a Panthic government. Ironically, it was ambitious elements within the

12 See Appendix. 'Sant Longowal-Rajiv Gandhi's Accord'. In August 1987, shortly before Haryana was to go to the polls, Justice Eradi of the Supreme Court submitted his report to the government. It was promptly accepted by the Union Ministry of Water Resources and as promptly rejected by both Punjab and Haryana. Amongst his other findings, the learned judge discovered additional sources of water, which no one before him was aware of.

Panth who conspired to pull him down. He was regarded as somewhat of an upstart. Badal and Tohra looked down on him as their creature and could not accept his ascendancy over them. Badal refused to join the ministry unless offered the post of Deputy Chief Minister. Barnala was reluctant to oblige as he knew full well that, as Badal had a large following of Akali MLAs and commanded greater prestige than he, it would not take him very long to reoccupy the Chief Minister's chair in which he had sat twice before. Barnala felt safer with Balwant Singh as his number two man. Balwant was not a Jat; he made a good Man Friday who could manipulate Akali politicians by bullying and bribery and was primarily interested in feathering his own nest. Then there was Tohra in control of the SGPC but plainly ambitious to become Chief Minister. There was also a new aspirant, the young Amarinder Singh, a Congressman turned Akali, who was a scion of the Patiala family. Cracks in the facade of Akali unity began to appear soon after the Akali government took office.

The Longowal-Gandhi accord was based on the assumption that both parties would abide by its terms, deliver the goods, and stand firm against forces eager to see it unstuck. As it turned out, neither party showed much eagerness to fulfil its part of the contract and lost out to the accord breakers. The first blow was struck by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. He had given a solemn undertaking that Chandigarh would be transferred to the Punjab on Republic Day, 26 January 1986. It was not. The official excuse was that the Matthew Commission, despite two extensions of tenure, had not been able to complete the task of identifying villages that were to be given to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh. The real reason was that Rajiv Gandhi had been lending an ear to Bhajan Lal, Chief Minister of Haryana, and come to the conclusion that if he gave Chandigarh to the Punjab he would lose the Hindu vote in the Haryana elections scheduled for the following year. Barnala, who should have made an issue of the breach of faith and tendered his resignation, accepted the Prime Minister's excuse and hung on to his Chief Ministership. Besides, his own government had been dragging its feet over

digging its part of the SYL canal on which virtually no work had been done in the preceding months. Barnala also exposed himself to his critics as a puppet of the central government.

As the moderates began squabbling among themselves, the extremists started extending their control over the community with renewed vigour. On the day Chandigarh was due to be transferred to the Punjab and was not, they ejected the SGPC from the management of the Golden Temple, hoisted Khalistani flags, and began the demolition of the Akal Takht under the guidance of a five-member Panthic committee. Thus, they outmanoeuvred Tohra who had hoped to rehabilitate himself with the masses through this kind of gimmickery. He agreed to a joint kar seva with the extremists. Though still President of the SGPC, he lost control of the Sikh's most important shrine. The Central Government was alarmed and decided to prepare itself for further eventualities. On 1 April 1986 it appointed Siddhartha Shankar Ray Governor of the Punjab; as Chief Minister of Bengal he had had experience in dealing with extremists. It was clear that the central government was losing faith in Barnala's ability to handle them.

The extremists pressed on their victory. On 29 April 1986 they passed a formal resolution proclaiming Khalistan[13] and again hoisting the flag of Khalistan in the Golden Temple. With the Prime Minister's approval, Governor Ray and his police chief, Julio Ribeiro, pressurized Barnala into taking action against this flagrant act of sedition. The following morning (30 April 1986) Barnala ordered the police to enter the Golden Temple to apprehend the secessionists. This gave Badal, Tohra and Amarinder Singh the opportunity they were waiting for. They denounced the entry of the police as a second Operation Blue Star and asked their followers in the Legislative Assembly to move a vote of no-confidence against the Barnala ministry. A sizeable number of

13 The proclamation is reliably believed to have been instigated by Sikh organization based in Washington DC. Its secretary general was Major General Jaswant Singh Bhullar who had made a timely escape from the Golden Temple just before the army launched Operation Blue Star.

ministers and MLAs deserted Barnala. But Barnala's deputy, Balwant Singh, was more than a match for the defectors. He bundled the remnants and had them taken to a rest house in Himachal where they could not be reached by leaders of the dissident faction. They were brought back to the Assembly just in time to cast their votes in favour of the government. Everyone of those who stayed loyal was rewarded with a ministerial post or the chairmanship of a public undertaking. The new ministry was sworn in on 6 May 1986. Now Barnala was in fact reduced to being a puppet of the central government, and dependent on the support of Congress MLAs to continue as Chief Minister. He suffered yet another setback in the SGPC elections. His nominee, Kabul Singh, was defeated by Tohra who was re-elected President for the sixteenth time. The next day Tohra and Badal were arrested.

The extremists entrenched in the Golden Temple decided that the time had come for them to finish off all the so-called moderates. In February 1987 they installed Darshan Singh Ragi, a very popular hymn singer, as the acting head priest of the Akal Takht and appointed their nominees as head priests of the takhts in the Punjab. The high priests, acting in the name of Panthic unity, called on the different Akali Dals to dissolve themselves. Barnala refused to dissolve his Longowal Akali Dal and was promptly declared a tankhaiya. He had lost all round: his colleagues let him down, the Panth disowned him and the Prime Minister betrayed him.

There is little doubt that the accord got unstuck largely because of Rajiv Gandhi's failure to fulfil his part of it. He was unable to resist the pressures brought on him. First there was Buta Singh smarting under the insult of having been declared a tankhaiya in September 1984 and then excommunicated in April 1985. In May 1986 Rajiv Gandhi had appointed him Home Minister. Buta Singh had scores to settle with the Akalis and the high priests. Then there was Darbara Singh. His nominee for president of the Provincial Congress Committee, Santokh Singh Randhawa, was accused of having had links with the terrorists and forced to resign in June 1985. In his place the

Prime Minister had appointed a totally non-descript windbag, a retired Major General, Rajinder Singh Sparrow, MP. The Punjab Congress party had ceased to count and Darbara Singh was anxious to take over command. And, finally, there was Bhajan Lal of Haryana who never ceased dinning into the Prime Minister's ear that every concession to the Sikhs or the Punjab would lose him Hindu votes in Haryana. Rajiv Gandhi lent an ear to this mischiefmonger and dismissed Barnala's Akali government on 11May 1987. A few months later his party got the worst drubbing it ever had in Haryana. He had lost Punjab and Haryana, as well as his image of being a clean politician.

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24. Foreign Connections and Khalistan

Government spokesmen and the Indian media accuse foreign agencies of trying to destabilize India by providing Sikh terrorists money, arms, training facilities, and shelter. The two most frequently named are the American CIA (occasionally alleged to operate through West German agents), and Pakistan. Although no hard evidence has so far been adduced to prove the involvement of any foreign government, the Government of India has confronted the Government of Pakistan with the testimony of captured Sikh terrorists which substantiate the existence in Pakistan of agencies which provide them sanctuary, indoctrinate and train new entrants, help them to purchase arms and smuggle them into India. Pakistan has consistently denied these charges. The only concrete evidence available so far of foreign involvement in terrorism and propogating the demand for Khalistan are the activities of individual Sikhs and Sikh organizations in England, Canada, and the United States.

It is estimated that out of nearly 18 million Sikhs, almost two million live outside India. Of 3000[1] gurdwaras, nearly 500 are situated outside India. There is hardly a country in the world without a few Sikh families with a place of worship and social gatherings of their own. Of these, the largest number are in Britain.

1 N. S. Shergill, *International Directory of Gurdwaras and Sikh Organizations*, Southhall, UK (L. Vendee Brothers, 1985).

Till the end of World War II, Sikhs in the UK numbered only a few thousand. They had one central gurdwara in London's Shepherd's Bush and a few smaller ones in cities like Manchester and Birmingham. The community consisted of students, professionals and Bhatra pedlars. After Independence and the division of Punjab in 1947, a steady stream of Sikh emigrants uprooted from Pakistan started flowing into England. They found ready employment in English-owned factories, then woefully short of semi-skilled hands. They were followed by Sikhs from Kenya, Uganda and the other countries of East Africa once ruled by the British. They were largely educated professionals, tradesmen or skilled artisans. The last group of Sikh migrants came after Operation Blue Star and the anti-Sikh violence following Mrs Gandhi's assassination in the autumn of 1984. Though comparatively small in number, this last group were religious fundamentalists bitterly opposed to the Indian government. The Sikh community in England is now estimated to be nearly 300,000, and its 145 gurdwaras are mostly under the control of extremists.

In an earlier chapter we have taken note of Sikh communities in Canada and the United States. Until World War II there were no more than about 10,000 Sikhs in these two countries. By 1985 it was estimated that they numbered between 120,000 and 200,000 in Canada and over 125,000 in the United States. There are 125 gurdwaras in Canada and about 90 in the United States. As in England, in these countries too they are largely under the control of extremists.

Until 1984, the activities of foreign Sikh communities (except for the brief Canadian and American involvement in the Ghadr party) were confined to the affairs of gurdwaras in their localities. After the storming of the Golden Temple by the Indian army their attitude underwent a complete transformation. The more orthodox and politically motivated new arrivals ousted the unorthodox and usually clean-shaven Sikhs from control of the gurdwaras and turned them into forums of anti-Indian government propaganda. Large numbers of organizations came up to propagate Khalistan and help the terrorists in India. Camps

were set up and mercenaries hired to train them in guerilla warfare. Almost every terrorist organization in the Punjab had its counterpart in England, Canada, and the United States. They had their Babbar Khalsa, the Akhand Kirtani Jatha, the Khalsa Commando Force, the Khalsa Liberation Force, the Bhindranwale Tiger Force, the Dashmesh Regiments and the International Sikh Youth Federation. Collections were regularly made in gurdwaras, to be remitted to their parent bodies in India. Several acts of violence were committed in all three countries.[2]

After the anger over Operation Blue Star and the killing of Sikhs in November 1984 had somewhat abated, these organizations split into many factions. The police and intelligence agents succeeded in infiltrating them and bringing their activities to an end.

Most foreign Sikh organizations now exist only in names printed on their letterheads, with very small memberships and they are usually located in the homes of their founder-presidents. Of this kind are Ganga Singh Dhillon's Nankana Sahib Foundation and the Sikh Commonwealth Foundation; the Sikh Council of North America; the Sikh Foundation of USA, and the International Sikh Youth Federation. The only one of any consequence

2 Besides organizing protest meetings outside Indian missions, there were instances of roughing up the personnel of Indian embassies and legations. Canadian Sikh terrorists succeeded in planting time bombs in Air India's *Kanishka* which went down into the sea off the Irish coast on 23 June 1985 with all its 329 passengers and crew. Another bomb placed in another aircraft at the same time killed two off-loaders in Tokyo's Narita airport. A year later a conspiracy to blow up another Air India plane leaving New York on 31 May 1986 was unearthed at Montreal and two members of the Babbar Khalsa convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. On 25 May 1986 Punjab's Planning Minister. Malkeat Singh Sidhu, was shot and seriously injured near Vancouver. Four members of the International Sikh Youth Federation were convicted and given twenty-year sentences. On 14 June 1986 seven members of the International Babbar Khalsa allegedly on their way to India to blowup the Indian Parliament were arrested in London. They were tried in Canada and acquitted for lack of evidence. Conspiracies were unearthed in the United States. These included plans to murder the Indian Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of Haryana, Bhajan Lal.

is the World Sikh Organization constitued on 27 July 1984 in New York. At one time it claimed a membership of 15,000 in Canada, 1000 in the UK and 1000 in the United States. It survived largely because of the funds made available to it by a few rich Sikhs like Didar Singh Bains of Yuba City. At one time Major General (retired) Jaswant Singh Bhullar was its secretary general. After he was relieved of his post it ceased to be active. All that remains of the Khalistani organizations in North America is the International Sikh Organization with a membership of under 150. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, an eminent molecular biologist, presides over it as well as over the Council of Khalistan. He remains about the only person of any calibre who maintains contacts with Senators and Congressmen and issues propaganda material mostly concerned with the violation of human rights in India.

The movement for Khalistan remains a non-starter. It was launched in September 1971 by a press-statement issued in London by Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan. A month later, an advertisement in the *New York Times* of 13 October 1971 announced the establishment of Khalistan. Nine years later (12 April 1980), Chauhan announced his election as president of the National Council of Khalistan with Balbir Singh Sandhu as its secretary general. He proceeded to name his cabinet ministers and appoint ambassadors to foreign countries. Till 1988 the only country to accede to his request to open an embassy was Ecuador. This did not deter his supporters in Canada from issuing Khalistani passports, currency and postage stamps, which have become collectors' items.

The movement for Khalistan has failed to gain acceptance among Indian Sikhs. Apart from raffish bands of the AISSF and clerics of the Damdami Taksal who periodically hoist Khalistan flags in the Golden Temple and shout slogans, it has no buyers. Even among foreign Sikhs the demand for Khalistan has subsided. A handful continue to make pro-Khalistani speeches, but a larger number have distanced themselves from them and resent the misuse of gurdwaras for political purposes. Satindra Singh, an eminent Sikh journalist who made an extensive study

of Sikh communities in foreign countries in late 1983, came to the conclusion that the most that Sikhs in England, Canada and the United States do now is to let off steam against the Indian government at their Sunday gatherings and are no more than weekend Khalistanis.[3] Remittances to terrorists in the Punjab have declined.

Summing Up

The five centuries of the history of the Sikhs may be divided into two: the first three hundred years are roughly divisible into three periods of one hundred years each; the second part into four periods of fifty years each. Guru Nanak proclaimed his mission around the year AD 1500. A little over a hundred years later (in 1604) Guru Arjun completed the compilation of the sacred scripture, the Adi Granth, and gave the Sikhs a holy city of their own, Amritsar. These hundred years saw the evolution of Sikh religious philosophy. In the hundred years that followed, the Sikhs gradually turned from a quietist sect of Nanak Panthis (those who followed the path of Nanak) into a group animated by visions of power. The seal of approval was given by the establishment of the militant fraternity of the Khalsa by the last of the Sikh Gurus, Gobind Singh, in 1699. The century that followed witnessed Sikh ascendancy as a political power, with Banda Bairagi striking a near fatal blow to Mughal rule in the Punjab, followed by marauding bands of the Dal Khalsa spreading their arms from Attock to the Ganges. Its conquests were consolidated by Ranjit Singh when he captured Lahore in 1799 and proclaimed himself Maharajah of the Punjab.

Maharajah Ranjit Singh's forty years (1799–1839) remain the golden age of Sikh political achievement. With his death began the disintegration of the Sikhs as a political and social force. The two Anglo-Sikh wars ended in the defeat of Sikh armies and the annexation of their kingdom in 1849. Their social decline, though little noticed in the earlier stages, began at the same

3 *Indian Free Press Journal.*

time. The kesādhārī Khalsa were threatened with extinction as large numbers began to abandon the external forms (unshorn hair and beards) and became sahajdhārī Sikhs. The Khalsa tradition was artificially kept alive by the British according kesādhārī Sikhs economic and political privileges like preferential recruitment in the army and the civil services, and later, separate electorates and the reservation of seats in the legislatures. This induced the kesādhārī Khalsa to distance themselves from the sahajdhārīs as well as from Hindus who believed in Sikhism. There was a parallel decline in the quality of Sikh political organizations, their leadership and their methods of approach. In the late nineteenth century, up to the end of World War I, it was the Chief Khalsa Diwan led by aristocrats like Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, Harbans Singh of Attari, and, on the outer periphery, men like Raja Sir Daljit Singh and Sir Jogindra Singh—all well educated, loyal to the British and believing in representations and constitutional methods. After the War, the Chief Khalsa Diwan retreated into the background and was replaced by the Akali Dal. The Akali Dal discovered that confrontation with the administration through non-violent non-cooperation and passive resistance was more productive of results than representations to the rulers or resolutions in legislatures. A new breed of leaders consisting largely of village jathedars came to the fore. However, in these early years of agitation, they accepted as their leaders educated men dedicated to their cause: such men were Baba Kharak Singh, Mehtab Singh and Master Tara Singh. They also left the task of political and constitutional negotiations to men of knowledge and experience like Ujjal Singh, Buta Singh and Sampuran Singh, who represented the community at the Round Table Conferences. Nearer the time of the transfer of power, there were shrewd politicians like Gyani Kartar Singh to negotiate on behalf of the Sikhs. At the same time, they benefitted from the more-than-willing guidance tendered to them by leaders of the Indian National Congress. This covered up for inexperienced mediocrities like Baldev Singh, who accepted Pandit Nehru as his mentor.

It was after Independence and partition of the Punjab that the quality of Sikh leadership was vulgarized and went into rapid decline. Able men like Swaran Singh, Pratap Singh Kairon and Zail Singh went out and joined the Congress party. The educational and ethical standards of the emerging Akali leadership fell well below the level of their predecessors. Factionalism, switching parties to better prospects of getting ministerships or lucrative posts in state-controlled enterprises, became the chief motivating factors. Corruption became rampant in the gurdwaras. Misuse of gurdwara funds for political purposes and manipulating the enormous patronage of the SGPC over the appointments of head priests, granthis, ragis, sevadars, the personnel of thousands of educational institutions, hospitals and orphanages were used to consolidate personal political power. An example of the degradation in the quality of leadership of the SGPC was Gurcharan Singh Tohra, a leftist of very little education who succeeded in being re-elected president for sixteen successive terms and, at the same time, had two terms as a member of Parliament, which he rarely attended. In secular politics, it saw the emergence of men like Badal, Balwant Singh and Amarinder Singh, whose primary commitment was to themselves. Gentlemen-politicians like Barnala were sidelined. In due course, the clergy, consisting of head priests, ragis and granthis felt that they had been left out in the cold for too long and staked their claim to control gurdwara funds and have their voice heard in community politics. Thus, the elected SGPC yielded power to priests nominated by it. It saw the elevation of the hymn-singer Darshan Singh Ragi[4] to the post of acting Head Priest of the Akal Takht and, for a very short period, guiding the destinies of the Panth. In their turn, the clerics had power wrenched out of their hands by lads of the AISSF and nominees of the Damdami Taksal reared in the Bhindranwale

4 Darshan Singh (b. 1936) in the village of Suranwala (District Sahiwal, now in Pakistan) is an Arora Sikh, He has a Master's degree in music. He is the most highly paid ragi and preacher. He came into politics after Operation Blue Star and was twice detained in prison for his fiery sermons denouncing the government.

school of terrorism. It is they who began to call the shots in more senses than one.

The Sikhs' self-image bears little resemblance to reality. The spirit of one-upmanship which had helped them in becoming the most prosperous and go-ahead community of India was replaced by empty bombast. Devotion to religion gave way to a display of religiosity. Religious life declined into meaningless ritual and akhand paths through hired granthis; worship of the Granth, as if it were an idol, replaced its study as an hymnal of religious philosophy; and kirtans by professional ragis demanding high fees like film playback singers proliferated. Ragis and granthis acquired vested interests in perpetuating these practices. Despite claims of outlawing the caste system, discrimination against lower-caste Sikhs is only a shade less than amongst Hindus. The message of goodwill towards all mankind enshrined in the Granth has been reduced to a litany to be chanted on ceremonial occasions; Guru Gobind Singh's exhortation to draw the sword only after all other means have failed to bring evil-doers to the right path is honoured more in breach than in observance. Few people dare to condemn gangsters who haul out innocent, unarmed people from buses and kill them, lob grenades in crowded market places and cinemas. The Hindu baiter, Bhindranwale, has become a martyred hero of lumpen sections of Sikh society. At times it appears that perhaps the Khalsa have run the course of history prescribed for them and that their Gurus in their inscrutable wisdom have given them leaders who will fulfil their death-wish.

OPUS EXEGII

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Epilogue

Memories of the storming of the Golden Temple in June 1984 and the massacre of over 5000 innocent Sikhs following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on 31 October 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards, remain deeply etched in the minds of the people of northern India. There is, however, a deep divide in the way these events are perceived by the Sikhs and Punjabi Hindus. Those who justify the events harp on the hateful speeches against the Hindus delivered by Bhindranwale from the Temple precincts, the reign of terror let loose by his armed followers in Punjab and Haryana, veiled threats to set up an independent Sikh State and the hoisting of Khalistan flags on the Akai Takht. Those who condemn them harp on the wanton desecration of the most sacred of Sikh shrines entailing a heavy loss of lives and property, issuing a White Paper to whitewash its evil deeds, and the reluctance of successive governments to bring perpetrators of anti-Sikh pogroms to justice by the simple ruse of appointing one Commission of Enquiry after another as a result of which not one has yet been nailed for his misdeeds. As a result, incidence of crime, which had been high during Bhindranwale's days of political and religious ascendancy, increased even further. Rajinder Kaur, daughter of Master Tara Singh, was murdered in a Punjab village and H. S. Manchanda of the Delhi Gurdwara Committee was shot dead in Delhi. Even while Sant Longowal was negotiating peace with Rajiv Gandhi (signed on 24 July 1985), an Air India plane, *Kanishka*, flying

from Vancouver, Canada, to London, blew up off the Irish Coast on 23 June 1985, killing all its 329 passengers and crew. Two baggage handlers at Narita Airport, Tokyo, were killed as they were clearing baggage for a plane bound for India. In both cases the perpetrators of the crime were Sikh emigrants settled in Canada. The following month, Lalit Maken, MP and son-in-law of President Shankar Dayal Sharma, was shot dead in broad daylight in Delhi. On 20 August 1985 Sant Longowal was murdered while at prayer in a gurdwara in Sherpur, a village in the district of Sangrur. In the Punjab, violence spread to all the districts of the state and terrorists reoccupied the Akal Takht. S. S. Barnala, who was elected Chief Minister of the state following the Rajiv Longowal accord, began to lose grip of the administration. The year 1986 began with widespread protests in Punjab and Haryana. The All India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF) spearheaded the agitation for the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab. Akali factions pitched in with *rasta roko* (block traffic) on highways. In Haryana, similar rasta roko agitations were started by the Opposition with the blessings of the state government. The best the Central Government could do was to appoint a one-man commission under K. M. Mathew to identify Hindi-speaking villages to be given to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh going to Punjab. The two most disputed villages, Fazilka and Abohar, were largely Hindi-speaking but not contiguous to Haryana. In between lay the village of Kandukhera which was Punjabi-speaking and, in a poll conducted there, opted to stay in Punjab. That sealed the fate of Fazilka and Abohar as well.

Meanwhile terrorists redoubled their activities. They made an abortive attempt on the life of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on 2 October 1986 at Rajghat in Delhi. The next day Julio Ribeiro, DG Police, and his wife were shot at and wounded in Jalandhar. (A second attempt to kill Ribeiro in which he was seriously wounded was made when he was posted as Ambassador in Romania on 20 August 1991. In a deal to have Ribeiro's assailants released, an official of the Romanian Embassy in Delhi was kidnapped and released after 23 days). Among those who fell to assassins' bullets were the veteran Akali leader Jiwan Singh

Umranangal and the sons of two senior police officers, P. S. Kahlon and D. S. Mangat. Two other police officers, Arvinder Singh Brar and K. R. S. Gill, were shot dead during their morning jog in Patiala's National Institute of Sports (NIS). In August 1986, General (retd.) A. S. Vaidya, Chief of the Army Staff at the time of Operation Blue Star, was shot dead in Pune by two Sikh assailants.

Far from condemning these outrages, prominent Akali Dal political leaders levelled charges against the police for eliminating or detaining a large number of young Sikhs on mere suspicion. The charges were not substantiated by most human rights organizations active in Punjab and abroad. The Barnala government took no notice of these charges and counter-charges.

Barnala's worst critics were his rivals from the Akali party: Prakash Singh Badal, G. S. Tohra, and Amarinder Singh of Patiala who wanted the Chief Minister's post for themselves. Even his supporters in the Assembly who did not get ministerial posts became disgruntled.

By 1987 President Zail Singh and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi were apparently not on speaking terms. Barnala was further isolated as the acting Jathedar of Akal Takht. Darshan Singh Ragi reportedly declared him tankhaiya for having sent the police into the Golden Temple.[1] Elections were due in Haryana. Chief Minister Bhajan Lal persuaded the Prime Minister that if any further concessions were made to Punjab, the Congress party would forfeit the Hindu vote in Haryana. Rajiv Gandhi succumbed and dismissed the Barnala government, keeping the Punjab Assembly in 'suspended animation' and imposed President's Rule in May 1987. Nevertheless, the Congress party lost in Haryana!

★ ★ ★

The first month of the year 1988 will go down in the history of the Punjab as Black January. It started with the murder of two

1 From the *Tribune*, 17 January 1999.

senior Sikh police officers in Patiala by Sikh terrorists. Murders of both Hindus and Sikhs gathered pace. What made the situation worse was that no one in the Central Government nor any of the Akali leaders were sure about how to bring peace back to the state.

In desperation the Prime Minister's 'think tank' turned to Simranjit Singh Mann as a possible redeemer. According to unconfirmed reports, he was even offered the Chief Ministership of Punjab if he could restore normalcy to the state. Mann remained non-commital but was able to win over a large section of the Akalis to his side.

Meanwhile the situation in and around the Golden Temple became more volatile with terrorists entrenched in the premises exchanging fire with the police stationed on the periphery. S. S. Virk, DIG Police, was shot and seriously wounded outside the temple. Rajiv Gandhi and his advisors were compelled to take decisive action. Fortunately for them they found two capable officers to do the job: K. P. S. Gill, DG Police, and Sarabjit Singh, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar. Plans were drawn up under the guidance of Governor S. S. Ray, P. Chidambaram, and Ribeiro to surround the temple, place marksmen at vantage points and cut off men inside from access to potable water. Operation Black Thunder, as it came to be known, took place between 13–18 May 1988. Men and women hiding in the Akal Takht were compelled to come out. Two who tried to get away were shot; one committed suicide by swallowing a cyanide capsule; the rest surrendered with their heads held high. As an operation, Black Thunder was a thundering success.

To weed out the perennial problem of the regrouping of armed militants inside the Golden Temple, once and for all, the Central Government conceived of the 'Corridor Project' (popularly called *Galiara*). It envisaged the creation of a 30 to 60 metre security belt around the Temple and involved compulsory acquisition and demolition of thousands of private properties. Hefty compensation was paid and an ambitious rehabilitation and resettlement programme followed, but some landmarks of the old city like Mai Sewa Bazaar were lost for ever. Work on the project was

indefinitely suspended soon after, when a Superintending Engineer connected with the project was shot dead in his office at Amritsar.

However, the notion that Operation Black Thunder wiped out terrorists proved to be premature. Those killed in encounters with the police were promptly declared martyrs. Small shrines raised in their memory on sites of their cremation became places of worship. The government's attempt to forbid papers like *Ajit* from carrying obituary tributes and notices of *Akhan Paths* in memory of those who had fallen, were ignored. The peasantry still referred to terrorists affectionately as 'boys' or *Kharakoos* (hit men). They had no difficulty in getting more recruits to join them. Hindus in small numbers began to move out from villages under control of terrorists to settle in towns and cities where they felt safer.

★ ★ ★

In the early hours of the cold, cloudy morning of 6 January 1989, Satwant Singh and Kehar Singh were hanged to death in Delhi's Tihar Jail. They had been convicted for the murder of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi five years ago. Though many eminent jurists and retired judges of the Supreme Court were of the opinion that the life of Kehar Singh, who had been accused of conspiracy to murder, should have been spared, it was not. More significant was the fact that while Mrs Gandhi's murderers had been sent to the gallows in five years, scores of men who had allegedly taken active part in the murders of thousands of innocent Sikhs across the country to avenge her murder, roamed about the country freely. (Many have remained unpunished till the writing of this Epilogue in 2004). As might have been expected, there was a savage backlash in the Punjab where ten innocent Hindu villagers were lynched by an irate mob. A railway station was set on fire. Sikhs went in hundreds of thousands to gurdwaras to pray for the peace of the souls of Satwant Singh and Kehar Singh who were declared martyrs.

Terrorists found yet another excuse to step up their nefarious activities. They also found an ideal location from where they could operate and defy the police: a riverine track of 600 square miles lying along the banks of the Sutlej and Beas rivers covering parts of the districts of Ferozepur, Amritsar, Kapurthala, and Jalandhar, and at one point barely 10 miles from the border with Pakistan. *Mand,* as it was known, was wild, marshy land overgrown with pampas, elephant grass, and thorny scrub. When the rivers were in spate, large parts were flooded creating small islands accessible only by flat-bottomed boats. It had been a haven for wildfowl migrating across the snow-clad Hindukush and Himalayan ranges to breeding grounds in India and been converted to a bird sanctuary. It became the sanctuary of the two most dreaded gangster groups, the Khalistan Commando Force and the Babbar Khalsa International. Here they could live off the peasantry, extort money from them and take liberties with their womenfolk. By day they had the wild growth, sugarcane, and lentil fields to hide behind, at night they roamed free while the police locked themselves in the police stations. Of the two, the peasantry preferred to side with the gangsters who promised them protection for a price (*daswandh* or one tenth) rather than the police which periodically milched them but afforded no protection. In sheer desperation, the Punjab Police invited detectives from Scotland Yard for advice.

The Central Government was at its wits' end and unable to formulate a clear Punjab policy. It set up a special cabinet subcommittee comprising Narasimha Rao (Foreign Minister), K. C. Pant (Defence Minister), Buta Singh (Home Minister), S. B. Chavan (Finance Minister), and P. Chidambaram (Minister of State) and sent it to Chandigarh to interact with Punjab leaders. All three factions of the Akali party and the Janata Dal refused to meet them. The BJP simply sent them a memorandum, S. S. Barnala described it as an 'eyewash'. Buta Singh, who was expected to play a leading role in the conference, kept a low profile perhaps because there had been several allegations of corruption against him and his family.[2] At the end of

2 'Courtier Under Crossfire', *India Today,* 31 May 1989, pp. 28–34.

their confabulations, the best they could do was to suggest that the Rajiv–Longowal Accord be reactivated as a base for future negotiations. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who, when negotiating with Sant Longowal, had described the Anandpur Sahib Resolution as little more than a demand for more autonomy, denounced it in a speech delivered in Simla as 'separatist and a threat to the integrity of India'.

The end of the year 1989 saw Rajiv Gandhi voted out of his Prime Ministership and replaced by V. P. Singh. Lok Sabha elections were also held in Punjab. The Akali Dal faction headed by Simranjit Singh Mann won the majority of seats. Governor S. S. Ray resigned the same December and was replaced by Nirmal Mukherjee of the ICS. Punjab was the new Prime Minister's top priority. Soon after his installation he visited the State, went to the Golden Temple and made an impassioned plea to let bygones be bygones and start a new chapter of peace and goodwill. His ride in an open jeep on the way back from the Golden Temple was seen both as bold and epoch-making.

With the new Prime Minister came a new Governor. Nirmal Mukherjee was replaced by Virendra Verma, a relatively unknown politician and Member of the Rajya Sabha. In January V. P. Singh convened an all-parties conference in Ludhiana. Besides him, he had Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L. K. Advani, H. S. Surjit (CPI-M), and some Akali leaders. The Prime Minister repeated his plea to the Punjabis to 'give peace a chance'. There was much bonhomie among the participants. Simranjit Singh Mann received and saw off the Prime Minister at the airport. But it had no impact on the common people and even less on militant elements. One victim of their ire was Balwant Singh, who had played a significant role in signing the Rajiv–Longowal Accord, and was Finance Minister in Barnala's government. He was trying to persuade the Prime Minister to restore the suspended Punjab Assembly and revive democratic rule in the state. He was assassinated on 10 July 1990 in Chandigarh.

Killing of innocent people continued. In December 1989, J. S. Khudian, whom Mann had helped elect to the Lok Sabha,

disappeared from his village home the day after he had been sworn in. His body was recovered some days later from the Rajasthan feeder canal. Gobind Ram, a serving and controversial IPS officer was blown up by a bomb soon after his son had been murdered. Killings averaged 146 per month. The toll in 1989 was 2729 and in 1990 it went up to 3506. It was estimated that there were 178 'hard core' and 4733 other terrorists active in the state.[3] President's Rule was extended for another six months because of continuing violence.

Enter a new Prime Minister, Chandrashekhar, a new Governor, retrd. General O. P. Malhotra. And yet there was no clear-cut policy for a Punjab rapidly sliding into chaos. The Prime Minister was eager to end President's Rule, hold elections, and restore democratic rule in the state. The Governor gave top priority to putting down lawlessness. He inducted the Army to seal the border with Pakistan (Operation Rakshak) to put an end to gun-running. Meanwhile, different groups of terrorists ruled the countryside with laws of their own making: no street lights after sunset, village dogs to be silenced by poison or shot. No one was to sing the national anthem *Jana Gana Mana.* No one was to speak Hindi, only Punjabi was allowed; girls were not to wear jeans or saris, only salwar kameez and cover their heads with dupattas; they were not to use cosmetics or any kind of make-up either. Kharakoos (hit men) were to be addressed as *bhai* (brother) or Sardar. Except for big cities, it was the terrorist-constituted panchayats whose writ was law for the countryside. They ignored Akali leaders as much as they ignored the central and the state governments. It was estimated that in the past ten years over 25,000 innocent people had lost their lives in terrorist-related violence, more than casualties suffered by the Indian Army in the 1965 and 1971 wars against Pakistan.

By mid-summer 1991, the tide began to turn against the terrorists. The peasants had suffered extortion, murder, and rapes for too long. They welcomed Operation Rakshak and were eager to have at least a semblance of law and order restored.

3 *India Today*, April 1990.

They were unwilling to be ruled by gangs of dacoits masquerading under high-sounding names. The Prime Minister went out of his way to appease the Sikh community. Every meeting he addressed, he began with the greeting *Wah Guru Ji ka Khalsa, Wahguruji ki Fateh.* He promised to restore democratic rule in the State. His call of elections was somewhat premature. The Congress decided to boycott them. By the first week of June 1991, 20 candidates had fallen to terrorists' bullets. Election Commissioner T. N. Seshan postponed the Punjab poll. At the Centre Chandrashekhar was voted out of power and fresh elections called. K. P. S. Gill was brought back as head of the Punjab Police. No one had his hand on the pulse of the Jat peasantry as this Jat officer.

Five years of President's Rule, deployment of the Armed Forces, and the police had little impact on the chaotic conditions in the state. During this election campaign Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated on 21 May 1991 in Sriperumbudur and Narasimha Rao elected as Prime Minister. He decided it was best to shift the onus of administration on elected representatives of the people. As an inducement, he offered an economic package deal to the Punjab, after the elections were over. The state government owed over Rs 4200 crore to the Central Government. Akali leaders were adamant: announce the package deal first, hold the elections thereafter, they demanded. Governor Surendra Nath supported their stand. However, once again it was Bhajan Lal, Chief Minister of Haryana, who reportedly put the spoke in the wheels: if you give Punjab economic relief, you will forfeit Hindu support in the state, he argued. The Prime Minister succumbed without spelling out the package deal and announced elections for 19 February 1992.[4]

Leaders of terrorist gangs proclaimed that they would kill candidates who put up their names, as well as people who went to the polling booths. The Akalis were caught in the arras of a nut cracker: all their major factions barring one decided to

4 'Russian Roulette', *India Today*, 15 February 1992, pp. 23–5 and 'Accelerating Alienation', *India Today*, 15 March 1992, p. 26.

boycott the polls leaving the field wide open to the Congress, BJP, BSP, the two Communist parties and the Janata Dal. It was in fact a total give-way to the Congress in most constituencies barring the urban Hindu which supported the BJP. The turnout was abysmally low: in some constituencies as low as 1 per cent. The Congress party came to power with a bare 21.6 per cent of the vote. Beant Singh was elected Chief Minister.

Akali leaders called foul and regrouped in the second seat of power in the state which was entirely Sikh, the SGPC. And once again threatened to bring the administration to a standstill by launching yet another morcā. Their slogan was *Sarkar hatao* (remove the government), *Punjab bachao* (save Punjab), *Mantri Gherao* (immobolize the ministers). Before they could organize their morcā, Beant Singh put their leaders behind bars.

When terrorism raised its ugly head again, Beant Singh got K. P. S. Gill to deal with them. Operation Rakshak II was paying dividends. The Army combed the countryside for terrorists and their supporters. Terrorists were to be shot or captured. Villagers had to be won over. Instead of bullying them, as had been done in the past, the Army tried to befriend them. Wherever it went, it offered villagers food and medical assistance. The gambit paid off. Punjab peasantry had had more than its fill of lawlessness and began to help the police to hunt down gangsters and eliminate them. For some months it was the law of the jungle. Legal niceties were overlooked, some innocent people lost their lives, but by the end of 1993 a semblance of law and order was restored to the state.

Beant Singh took the bold step of organizing the Gram Panchayat elections in January 1993. Most of his cabinet colleagues were against this–militants would capture the Panchayats and declare Khalsa Panchayats, they argued. However, Beant Singh, who had himself been a Sarpanch and later Chairman of the Panchayat Samiti, knew the importance of these grass root democratic institutions, in his quest for earning legitimacy for his government and steering rural Punjab to normalcy. The turnout in these elections was over 90 per cent and Congress candidates won most of the seats. These elected representatives

proved to be an important link between the people and the local administration, including the police, in weeding out terrorism in the State.

The Galiara remained a corridor of neglect, till K. B. S. Sidhu, a young Sikh officer with barely eight years of service in the IAS, revived it in 1992–3, soon after being appointed Deputy Commissioner, Amritsar. This invited open threats from the top militants. Apparently, however, a secret unwritten agreement was forged between the Punjab government, lead by Beant Singh, and the SGPC. The concept of the Galiara project was quietly changed from that of a security belt to a second *prakarma* around the Golden Temple. SGPC agreed to unofficially vet the architectural design, on the condition that no Congress minister or dignitary would come and formally inaugurate the project, or any phase thereof, and claim credit for its implementation. The government agreed and also picked up the entire tab for the project. The project has brought about beautiful landscaping and water features that mesh harmoniously with the serenity of the Holy Shrine. Three-fourths of the 'Corridor' was completed between 1992 and 1996, but the most significant portion, the front one, still remains incomplete.

The SGPC, which came into existence in 1925, had always been a rival seat of power to the provincial government Since its inception it has been an Akali stronghold. It manages over 300 historic gurdwaras in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh as well as schools, colleges, hospitals, and other institutions financed by it.[5] It has an annual budget of around Rs 142 crores: its President enjoys enormous patronage in the appointment of granthis, raagis, sevadars as well as in the appointment of headmasters, principles and doctors in hospitals run by it. He also had the dominant role in the appointment of Jathedars to the Akal Takht. For over a quarter of a century, Gurcharan Singh Tohra had established an almost undisputed right to its Presidentship. He had

5 The latest figures released by the SGPC secretariat show 40 major and many unnamed gurdwaras under its management, 17 colleges, 22 schools, and four hospitals.

an ambivalent attitude towards the demand for Khalistan and good reason to be scared of terrorists, having been shot at and wounded by one.

The responsibility of conducting elections to the 185 member SGPC is vested in the provincial government. There had been no elections since 1984. By 1993, 47 members were dead. Beant Singh thought it was time to settle things once and for all by abolishing the SGPC. 'Times have changed', he said to the press, 'What is the need of the SGPC today? Like other religious groups, the Sikhs should manage their shrines with the help of local bodies'.[6]

The Chief Minister should have known that the one thing that would unite the ever-warring Akali factions was to meddle with the SGPC. And so they did. Tohra got the backing of Badal, Mann, and all the others. As ever in the past, their rallying cry was 'The Panth is in danger'. Sense prevailed and Beant Singh beat a hasty retreat. He turned his attention to getting rid of terrorism. He let Governor Surendra Nath and K. P. S. Gill, DG Police, do the job. Gill went about his task with demonic zeal. He was convinced that maintaining internal peace was the duty of the police and not the Army. He raised the strength of the Punjab Police from 35,000 to 60,000 men with sizeable infusion of *Mazjiabi* (scheduled caste) Sikhs. There was corresponding decrease in the strength of paramilitary forces from 400 to 260 companies. He had the full support of Lt General B. K. N. Chibber, Corps Commander of Jalandhar and later Security Advisor and then Governor of the State. With the money made available to him, he sowed seeds of discord in terrorist gangs and won over informers. Since these gangs operated largely after sunset, he launched Operation Night Dominance. He carried out a night operation at Behla near Taran Taran. Amongst the casualties were two notorious gang leaders—G. S. Manochahal and Kauli who had allegedly beheaded M. L. Manchanda of All India Radio. The killing of the two men broke the back of terrorism in the state. At no time did these terrorists

6 *India Today*, 15 March 1995.

have either religious or political motives behind them. They had on the contrary, become *luteyras* (free booters) looking for quick money: many joined them for him (*shaukiya taur pay*). Gill had reason to congratulate himself for ably accomplishing the job entrusted to him.

The Akalis redoubled their efforts to remove Beant Singh from the Chief Ministership. Earlier that year an Akal Takht—sponsored 'Khalsa March'—from Amritsar to Anandpur Sahib had received good response from villagers that lay en route. Encouraged by it, they announced another march from Amritsar to Delhi. Beant Singh scuttled the move by rearresting 19 top Akali leaders including Tohra, Badal, and Talwandi. The proposed march remained a non-starter.

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It was strange that while the rest of the Punjab was in turmoil, its largest city Ludhiana was booming and had become the entrepreneur's paradise. It had been producing bicycles and woollen fabrics: it more than doubled its output of both and with it became a centre for producing sewing machines and ancilliary products as well.

In the spring of 1994 an air of calm spread over the ripening wheat fields of the Punjab. There was an enormous turnout at the rural Olympics in Kila Raipur, a village some eleven kilometres from Ludhiana. For three days a carnival atmosphere prevailed as young men displayed feats of strength. Villagers played *kabaddi* and engaged in tugs of war against each other. A team came all the way from Vancouver, Canada, to participate in the games, to watch bull fights, ram fights, and the veterans race against each other. After many years, girls dared to join in the fun and games. There were no gold, silver or bronze medals for the winners but canisters of *ghee* (clarified butter). Such sporting fairs were held all over the state but Grewal Jats of Kila Raipur had taken the lead in 1933 by organizing hockey and kabaddi matches and gradually added another 50 events to their annual rural Olympiad.

The feeling of security was even more evident in the nearby city of Ludhiana. Rich industrialists moved freely without body-guards, workers came for night shifts without fear, cinemas were full for late night shows, more Contessa cars were seen on the roads, and hotel occupancy rose to over 90 per cent. The daily trading at the Ludhiana Stock Exchange grew fourfold from Rs 7 crores to over 30 crores. Industrial houses outside Punjab began to set up plants in the state. What was true of Ludhiana was equally true of the second largest city, Amritsar. Punjab remained at the top of Indian states in terms of prosperity; its per capita income was the highest in India and it continued to be the country's top producer of wheat and paddy.

* * *

In fighting terrorism the Punjab Police had committed violence against many innocent people. The five-man National Human Rights Commission visited the state (18 April 1994) to meet members of families of victims of police excesses. Both the government and Human Rights activists put their points of view before it. The Chairman of the Commission, Justice Misra, was quoted as saying, 'Even after the return of normalcy, the conduct of the police is still not normal'.[7]

On 29 November 1994 former President Giani Zail Singh who had earlier been Chief Minister of Punjab and Home Minister in the Central Government met with an accident near Raipur when he was returning from Anandpur Sahib to Chandigarh. His car had a head-on collision with a truck. He received serious injuries to which he succumbed later. Zail Singh was the son of a carpenter. Besides scriptural learning and Urdu, he had acquired a smattering of English. His persuasive tongue, earthy wit, and an uncanny ability to understand people helped him to rise to the highest position in the Republic. His death should have been a cause for national mourning. It was not.

7 'More Wrongs Than Rights: The Human Rights Commission Pulls Up Punjab Police', *India Today*, 15 May 1994, p. 36.

Despite having put Rajiv Gandhi on the Prime Minister's seat, he had failed to win his trust. Sikhs never forgave him for allowing the Army to storm the Golden Temple. His plea that he was kept in the dark about it did not cut ice since he later decorated many officers and men who had taken part in the Operation.

He also failed to act decisively when rampaging mobs went for the lives and properties of Sikhs after Mrs Gandhi's assassination. His reluctance to resign and walk out of the Presidential Palace robbed him of posthumous glory.

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Some of the inner secrets of how the Punjab Police was able to get the better of the terrorists came to light in February 1995. Some months earlier a small plane carrying Governor Surendra Nath and his family to their holiday destination had crashed killing all the occupants and crew. In the debris were found suitcases full of currency notes. It was known that he had been provided with large funds to disburse to informers and reward policemen who had terrorist scalps to their credit. But ugly rumours were afloat that he had apparently kept some of the money for himself. His official residence—Punjab Bhawan—was searched. Only a modest sum of cash (Rs 65,000) and jewellery was found.[8]

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Jubilation at having done away with terrorism forever proved somewhat premature. On 31 August 1995 Chief Minister Beant Singh was leaving the Punjab government secretariat in Chandigarh, when a suicide bomber blew himself, and the Chief Minister and over a dozen others with him. Nine men were arrested and put on trial. Two of the accused confessed to being a part of conspiracy to kill Beant Singh but till eight years after

8 www.hrw.org/reports/1997/WR97/AS IA-05.htm

the crime was committed the case had not been concluded. H. S. Brar of the Congress party took over as Chief Minister.

A serious case of breach of human rights that came to light was of Jaswant Singh Khalra who had been collecting material on the secret disposal of bodies of some 2000 victims of police atrocities. He was picked up from his home in Amritsar on 6 September 1995. His body was discovered some days later. Though his widow was granted a compensation of Rs 10 lakhs, men who committed the crime were never brought to book.[9]

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After years of apparent reluctance to bring perpetrators of the massacre of Sikhs following Mrs Gandhi's assassination, a Delhi sessions judge issued warrants of arrest to the main accused including former Union Minister H. K. L. Bhagat, and remanded him to judicial custody. It did not amount to very much. Bhagat was soon out on bail as were the other accused named by unofficial commissions of inquiry. The name of the Congress remained as tainted as ever before. Some price for this had to be paid by Harcharan Singh Brar. Factionalism, which was as rife in the ranks of the Punjab Congress as it was amongst Akalis, became acute. Brar dropped many of Beant Singh's supporters from his 45-member Cabinet which earned him the hostility of those left out. Since elections were due in the state, Congress President Sitaram Kesri concluded that Brar lacked qualities of leadership and had Rajinder Kaur Bhattal elected Chief Minister in the hope that she would get the factions together to fight the elections.[10] She was the first woman ever to become Chief Minister of the state.

Akalis were always best when in opposition. Badal managed to get together different factions (except Mann's) to fight the Congress. His great triumph was a sweeping victory for his and

9 'The Case of the Missing Activist', *India Today*, 15 December 1995, p. 104. Also see 'Bitter Harvest', *India Today*, 16 June 1997, pp. 34–5.

10 *The Economic Times*, 29 May 2004.

Tohra's candidate in the SGPC elections. Tohra who had been President of the body for the last 22 years was once again elected to the post.

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The year 1996 brought a sad diminution in the image of K. P. S. Gill, DG Police, as the St George who slew the dragon of terrorism. In July 1988, at a private party in Chandigarh, Gill, a swashbuckling bon viveur, 'slapped' the bottom of a senior woman member of the IAS in a huff because she refused to talk to him. She lodged a criminal case against him for outraging her modesty. On 6 August 1996 a Chandigarh Magistrate sentenced Gill to three months rigorous imprisonment and two months simple imprisonment and a fine of Rs 700. He was let off on probation after promising 'good conduct'. Given his many achievements as a police officer, and being President of the Indian Hockey Federation and a man of letters, it is unfortunate that Gill was never able to totally live down this incident.[11]

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With State elections scheduled to take place, Chief Minister Rajinder Kaur Bhattal announced a 50-point programme including free electricity to farmers owning seven acres or less of agricultural land. The Akali opposition led by Badal upped her gesture by offering free power to all farmers no matter how much land they owned. The electoral dice was heavily loaded against Bhattal and her party. Ex-Chief Minister H. S. Brar was allegedly unhappy and refused to contest. So did M. S. Bitta of the Youth Congress, giving Badal reason to gloat over the victory he anticipated.

Chief Election Commissioner M. S. Gill further upset Congress electoral prospects by announcing polls on 7 March, a

11 'A Tight Spot', *India Today*, 31 August 1998, p. 53. 'Costly Misconduct', *India Today*, 31 August 1996, pp. 118–19.

month earlier than expected. There was a frantic realignment of parties and a hunt for candidates likely to win. The Congress party failed to gain allies; even the two Communist parties refused to join the Congress-led secular front. The scheduled caste vote (approximately 28 per cent) which could have made a difference in the fortunes of the two main contesting parties was not available to either as their leader Kanshi Ram decided to go it alone.

When it came to picking up candidates there was no difference between the Congress and Akalis: relations and cronies came first, others later. Or as Punjabis put it, first comes *bhai* (brother) and *jawai* (son-in-law), others follow. It was alleged that Badal too gave preference to his relations as Balram Jakhar of the Congress had apparently done. He was careful enough to omit Amarinder Singh of Patiala who he felt may come up as a strong rival to challenge his leadership.[12]

Punjabis felt that the Akali-BJP combine had more to it to ensure communal harmony between Sikh and Hindus than the Congress Party's non-communal secularism. There was a 69 per cent turnout at the polls. The Akali-BJP combine swept the polls winning 93 of the 117 seats, the Congress came a poor second with 14, BSP 1, CPI 2, Akali Dal Mann 1, Independents 6. Badal was elected Chief Minister.

Besides administering the state, Badal had to contend with what remained of the terrorist gangs as well as human rights activists who produced concrete evidence of police excesses while engaged in fighting them. Five militant groups were known to be still operating: Babbar Khalsa (Pakistan-based) with 53 led by Wadhawa Singh; Khalistan Commando Force (Pakistan-based) with 48 led by Paramjit Singh Panjwari; Khalistan Liberation Front with 38 led by D. S. Lahara who had been extradited from the US and was in jail; Khalsa Commando Force with 8 led by W. S. Zaffarwal based in Switzerland, and Khalsa Liberation Front (Pakistan-based) with 12 led by P. S. Sekhon. That they were still capable of inflicting heavy damage was proved on

12 'All in the Family', *India Today*, 15 February 1997, pp. 76–7.

8 July when a train near Bhatinda was blown up leaving 38 dead and 61 injured.

Meanwhile, human rights activists published a report entitled 'Reduced to Ashes' accusing the police of murdering in cold blood almost 2000 suspected terrorists and sympathisers and cremating their bodies in Amritsar, Taran Taran and other places. More active among them was J. S. Khalra who was picked up from his home in Amritsar and murdered. Nine policemen including some decorated for bravery were arrested in this connection. One of them, Ajit Singh Sandhu, twice SSP Taran Taran, committed suicide by throwing himself in front of the Himalayan Queen.[13]

Badal made a positive gain in winning over Didar Singh Bains, wealthy peach-grower of California who had founded the World Sikh Organization in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star. Badal invited him over and took him around Punjab to see the actual state of affairs.[14] Today only US-based Gurmeet Singh Aulakh continues to raise the issue in the West.[15]

A sure sign that things had returned to normal was the visit of Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh to the Golden Temple. The couple were given a warm welcome. At one time Sikhs, like other Indians, had been British subjects, now there was a sizeable community of Sikhs (estimated around 400,000) who were British citizens and had their members in the British Parliament.

Switching parties and ditching colleagues is commonly practised by Indian politicians. Those in Punjab are no exception. Buta Singh, for instance, joined the BJP-dominated Central Government as a Cabinet Minister. Having been ditched by Badal, Amarinder Singh switched over to the Congress. He made his entrance by the back door.[16] A non-governmental organization,

13 'The Case of a Missing Activist', *India Today*, 15 December 1995, p. 104. Also see 'Bitter tearvest' *India Today*, 16 June 1997, pp. 34–5.

14 'Punjab's Prodigal Son', *India Today*, 22 December 1997, p. 6.

15 US Sikh leader backs Akal Takht edict, *Indian Express*, 24 January 1999.

16 'Cultural Coup', *India Today*, 26 October 1998, pp. 76–7

The Indian National Trust for Act and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) set up by the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984 on the pattern of Britain's National Trust to conserve artistic, cultural, and environment heritage, had been presided over in succession by Rajiv Gandhi, Pupul Jayakar, and Bhaskar Ghose (retired DG AIR and DD and Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting). It had a meagre budget of Rs 5 crores and did little more than occasionally raise objections against encroachments of ancient monuments and having annual general meetings to re-elect office bearers. However, in its October meeting, Ghose, who expected to be re-elected President, was in for a surprise. Amarinder Singh reportedly turned up with a body of 100 newly elected members from Punjab and had himself elected President. Ghose made a graceful exit with the caustic remark, 'If there is so much interest in culture and heritage in Punjab, it augurs well for the country'.[17]

A minor hullabaloo was created by Punjabis settled in Terai. It had been a jungle infested with wild animals and malarial swamps. At the invitation of the then Chief Minister of UP Pandit G. B. Pant, Punjabi and Bengali refugees from Pakistan were invited to reclaim the land and settle there. The Punjabi settlers, being proactive, soon converted the area into the richest agricultural region of the country with sugar mills and ancillary industries. Their main town was named Udham Singh Nagar after the assassin of the perpetrator of the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh in 1919. When Uttaranchal was created in 1998, Udham Singh Nagar was made a part of the new state. There were loud protests from Punjabi fanners who in their zeal had encroached on lands of local adivasis and held land far more than the 18 acres allowed by the law. The Central Government took no notice of the agitation. Udham Singh Nagar remained a part of Uttaranchal and S. S. Barnala was appointed the state's first Governor.

1999 was to be the tercentenary of the Khalsa Panth founded by Guru Gobind Singh on 13 April 1699. It was good enough reason to celebrate the occasion on a grand scale, to remind

17 Ibid.

generations of Sikhs of their heritage. Badal had earlier visited Israel and been much impressed by Yad Vashem, the memorial to the victims of the holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis against the Jews. Badal set up the Khalsa Heritage Memorial Committee in Anandpur Sahib, headed by the then Finance Minister, Captain Kanwaljit Singh and invited Moshe Safdie, Boston-based Jewish architect of the Yad Vashem to design one for the Sikhs. He was to be assisted by a panel of Indian architects and Sikh intellectuals and historians including Dr J. S. Grewal, Kharag Singh, Dr Shaan, Brig. G. S. Grewal and others. Their brief was to design a memorial museum to be named *Ajooba* (Wonder). The centre piece decorating the building was to be a massive emblem, a two-edged dagger *(Khanda),* the *Nishan-e-Khalsa* (pride of the Sikhs).[18] The project was apparently estimated to cost between Rs 300 to 500 crores. The Punjab government promised Rs 160 crores. Prime Minister Vajpayee pitched in with another Rs 100 crores.[19] Didar Singh Bains paid Safdie his fee in US dollars.[20] A group of young IAS officers, including D. S. Jaspal, were initially put in charge of organizing the details of the celebrations and the full might of the state machinery was thrown behind the celebrations. By the autumn of 2003 the museum and several exhibition halls had been completed. The job of developing the complex with advanced special effects including lasers was assigned to NID Ahmedabad.[21]

The tercentenary celebrations of the founding of the Khalsa Panth were organized on a scale greater than any within living memory. From all over India and overseas, Sikhs came in hundreds of thousands on pilgrimage to Anandpur Sahib. Sikh scholars, jurists, artists, poets, painters, and athletes who had distinguished themselves in their respective fields were honoured with plaques of the Nishan-e-Khalsa. Sports like wrestling (a team came from Pakistan), tent pegging, skeet shooting, tug of

18 The *Tribune,* 11 October 1998.

19 Khalsa Panth's budget of Rs 8 billion may have led to Akali discord. Rediff.com, 17 February 1999.

20 'Complex Business', *India Today,* 16 November 1998, pp. 48–50.

21 Ibid.

war and much else went on while others flocked to local gurdwaras. It was evident, if any evidence was needed, that the Khalsa was as vibrant as ever since the day it was founded.

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The uneasy relationship between the Chief Minister and the President of the SGPC continued as before. Friction between the two came to a breaking point in the appointments of Jathedars of the takhts, mainly the Akal Takht from which *hukumnamahs* on religious matters were issued and men accused of breach of *maryada* (tradition) were summoned and punished. The influence of extremist sections advocating Khalistan was always evident. Tohra had their support. Badal had the backing of more moderate elements and held the trump card. He had Jathedar Ranjit Singh dismissed and replaced him first by the head priest of the Golden Temple Mohan Singh, and on his reluctance to accept the post, another priest Giani Puran Singh, one time ally of Bhindranwale, as acting Jathedar. Badal took on Tohra, who had been elected President of the SGPC for the twenty-fifth time. On 16 March 1999 he took the unprecedented step of proposing the name of Bibi Jagir Kaur to replace Tohra. She was the first woman to become President of the SGPC.

Jagir Kaur was a Lubana Sikh with a sizeable following in the subsect. Badal had her elected to the State Assembly and made her State Social Welfare Minister. She was never likely to pose a threat to Badal's hegemony over Sikh affairs. However, not long after her election, Jagir Kaur's reputation was mired by her opposition to her daughter's marriage and subsequent death under mysterious circumstances.[22] The cremation was questioned in the law courts by her son-in-law. She still stands accused of complicity in her daughter's death.[23]

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22 'Blood Ties', *India Today*, 8 May 2000, p. 59.
23 Ibid.

Punjab, like most other Indian states, was living beyond its means. Against its income of Rs 8450 crores, it was spending Rs 10,282 crores every year.[24] 'We are living on borrowed money', admitted Captain Kanwaljit Singh, the state's Finance Minister, at the time. Besides squandering large sums on organizing spectacles, government employees' emoluments were increased, state ministers got more perks, for example, a Tata Sumo for every member of the Vidhan Sabha, 500 litres of free diesel every month, and unlimited supply of petrol for every minister.[25]

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A significant event was the success of the Royal Canadian Police in cracking the conspiracy to blow the Air India plane, up the *Kanishka,* which crashed off the Irish coast on 23 June 1985, killing 329 passengers and crew and a blast in Tokyo's Narita Airpot killing two porters handling Air India baggage. The Canadian police arrested Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bogra in Vancouver. Of the other suspects, Talwinder Singh Parmar who had masterminded the conspiracy, was killed in an encounter with the Punjab police in 1992. Surjan Singh simply disappeared; Inderjit Singh who placed the bomb which exploded in Narita, was undergoing a sentence of 10 years imprisonment.

From the evidence produced in court, it appeared that the conspiracy was hatched in Amritsar by members of the Babbar Khalsa to avenge Operation Blue Star as close to its first anniversary as possible. The arrest and interrogation of one Lal Singh in Bombay in 1992 gave the Canadian investigators their first lead.[26] One of the key witnesses was Tara Singh Hayer, Editor of the Vancouver based *India Canadian Times,* and strongly opposed to Khalistan. He was murdered in 1998.

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24 See 'We are Broke', *India Today,* 14 February 2000, pp. 36–8.
25 Ibid.
26 The *Tribune,* 8 November 2000.

The Badal government's penchant for organizing spectacles continued. Maharajah Ranjit Singh's coronation anniversary was yet another occasion for celebrations on a national scale. A son et lumière programme was inaugurated in Amritsar to highlight achievements of the Maharajah. An international conference was organized in Delhi. The chief guest was Prime Minister Vajpayee. Several of his cabinet ministers were present. A scion of the Fakir family who had served as the Maharajah's ministers and governors came from Lahore, as well as a Frenchman whose ancestor had served in the Maharajah's army. As conferences go, this one was as much of a success as any other and got a great deal of coverage.

While Badal was preoccupied with organizing spectacles and conferences, his adversaries in the Punjab were busy preparing for state elections scheduled in early 2002. Public opinion polls indicated that the Akali–BJP government was heading for a defeat. Psephologists predicted a clean sweep for the Congress party led by Amarinder Singh and Rajinder Kaur Bhattal. The results belied their forecasts. The Congress won by a slim majority of five seats winning only 62 seats of the 117 member legislature, with its ally CPI getting one. Badal's Shiromani Akali Dal retained 41. The main loser was the BJP which lost 20 of the 23 seats it contested. Urban Hindus voted for the Congress, as did the Dalits. Bhattal staked her claim to be re-elected Chief Minister. Sonia Gandhi, President of the Congress, preferred Amarinder Singh. Next she tried to be elected President of the state Congress party. Amarinder Singh, however, preferred to have ex-MP H. S. Hanspal. Bhattal gave in and accepted a ministership.

Although the State's finances were in poor shape, Amarinder Singh gave priority to settling old scores with Badal: armed with a broom he announced he would sweep corruption out of the state.[27] Before he could lay his hands on Badal and his kin, he got an unexpected bonus in the way of disclosures made by the police of the corrupt practices alledgedly indulged in for over

27 Sweepstake, 'The Politics of Corruption', *India Today*, May 2002.

six years by Ravinder Pal Singh Sidhu, Chairman of the Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC). Sidhu had been a journalist with the *Indian Express*, the *Tribune*, and the *Hindu*. It was reported that Sidhu got down to converting the PPSC into a money-minting machine, drawing up a schedule of rates of payment to be made in cash for selection to all the Provincial Services.[28]

Going for Badal and his family proved less rewarding. Their homes were searched by the police. Measurements of their holdings were taken. Amarinder Singh accused his adversary with having extensive property in India and abroad under different names to which Badal responded by filing defamations suits against Amarinder Singh. Throughout September 2003, Amarinder Singh and Badal had slanging matches accusing each other of grabbing land and real estate and stashing away money in foreign banks.[29] Both made laughing stock of themselves and were lampooned in a charade enacted in public by the Punjabi humorist Jaspal Bhatti in Chandigarh.[30]

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The deaths of 102-year old Mohan Singh Oberoi and Raunaq Singh (September 2002) was a reminder of the spirit of enterprise that most Punjabis, Hindus and Sikhs, had in overcoming heavy odds. Mohan Singh had been a clerk in a small hotel in Simla owned by an Englishman who wanted to sell it and return to England. Mohan Singh persuaded him to sell the hotel to him. He went on to buy and build the most extensive chain of hotels in different states of India and abroad. Raunaq Singh had come from Lahore leaving the little he owned as a penniless refugee. He opened a shop selling steel pipes in Delhi's Chandni Chowk. He went on to manufacture Hume Pipes and then set up Apollo Tyres to meet rising demands of Indian automobile manufacturers. When Sanjay Gandhi launched the

28 'Job Mobster', *India Today*, 6 May 2002, pp. 24–6.
29 The *Indian Express*, 30 September 2003.
30 The *Tribune*, 27 September 2003.

Maruti car project, Raunaq Singh became the first Chairman of the company. Mohan Singh and Raunaq Singh left running enterprises with many billions of rupees. A more spectacular success was Bhai Mohan Singh's Ranbaxy founded in 1962. It is today the top pharmaceutical company in India with net annual global sales of 764 million US dollars and is currently managed by D. S. Brar. There were other Sikhs who made it into the top echelons of industry: the Sahnis of Bombay and Aurangabad, Charanjit Singh of erstwhile Coca Cola, Campa Cola and other soft drinks as well as hotel Le Meridien in New Delhi which after his death is managed by his wife Harjeet Kaur.

Summing Up

A balance sheet of the community's achievements and failures over the last twenty-five years does not read too badly. According to the census report of 2001, Punjab's population of 2.43 crores was increasing annually by 1.82 per cent. Of this over 60 per cent are Sikhs largely living in rural areas. Eighty per cent of Sikhs live in Punjab, around 19 per cent in other parts of India and 1 per cent have settled abroad. Though Punjab has slipped from its top position as the most prosperous state to the third after Delhi and Goa, its per capita income is Rs 15,255 (as given on page 47 of *Economic Survey of Punjab*), Sikhs remain the most prosperous major community of the country. While 26.10 per cent Indians live below the poverty line, the figure for Punjab is 6.16 per cent. In a country in which begging is rampant, one rarely, if ever, sees a Sikh stretch out his hands for alms.

Sikhs are often mocked by their detractors that the only culture they know is agriculture. This is far from the truth, as many have made their names as artists, dancers, musicians, film makers, and pop singers. Manjit Bawa, Arpita Singh, and Arpana Caur are among the best known Indian painters; Navtej Johar, a Bharatanatyam dancer, Singh Bandhus as classical singers, Dharmendra and Dara Singh as filmstars. Among film directors there is Kenyan born Gurinder Chadha whose *Bhaji on the Beach* and *Bend it Like Beckham* were box office successes in

England and India. Punjab's folk music and dance (bhangra) have had a new lease of life with the emergence of singer-dancers like Gurdas Mann, Daler Mehndi, Malkit Singh, and others. They draw a huge audience wherever they perform at home and abroad.

Social evils persist. Among the worst is female foeticide resulting in there being 874 females to every 1000 males. So does caste discrimination. Despite claims made by Sikhs that they are a casteless fraternity, lower caste Sikhs living in villages have their own gurdwaras. Three divisions based on caste persist, namely Jats, non-Jats comprising Brahmins, Khatriyas and Vaishyas, and Mazhabis. Inter-caste marriages between the three are frowned upon.

A noticeable change with portents for the future is the large scale influx of farm workers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. They come as labourers at harvest times but most stay in Punjab, make their homes, enroll as voters, and get ration cards. Sons of Sikh farmers avoid manual labour and try to emigrate to Europe, Canada, and the United States or any other foreign country to which they can get visas and work permits. If this continues, it may have far-reaching consequences in the communal equation in the state.

Relations between Hindus and Sikhs which had become acrimonious after Operation Blue Star and the anti-Sikh violence in November 1984 have gradually but surely become more harmonious. Though relations may not return to the ideal of *naunh-mass* (as a nail and the flesh out of which it grows), it can be said that they live in peace but separately.

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Sikhs settled abroad have much to be proud of. In Canada they started as lumbermen, factory workers, and cab drivers. Now they are farmers, professionals, and entrepreneurs and make their presence felt in the political life of the country. After Ujjal Dosanjh who became Prime Minister of British Columbia (2000–1), Gulzar Cheema became a Minister of the Provincial

government and Herb Dhaliwal a Minister in the Federal government. Raminder Singh Gill is a Parliamentary Assistant of the Prime Minister. In the United States, besides Didar Singh Bains the 'Peach King', there is H. S. Samra specializing in growing Indian vegetables like okra karela. Dr N. S. Kapani, father of fibre optics, who was the main spirit in organizing exhibitions of Sikh relics in London, San Francisco, and Washington, is among the top patent holders of fibreglass products. Sant Singh Chhatwal has a chain of restaurants and hotels across the country and was one of the main fund raisers for President Bill Clinton's election campaign. Nanak Kohli, a wealthy businessman of Washington DC has set up a charitable trust of Rs 25 crores to boost primary education in India. In England there are Sikh members of Parliament both in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Reuben Singh is the youngest man to become a millionaire. There are Sikh judges and mayors of burroughs. The community's success story is repeated in East Africa and Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. It could be said that though the Sikhs have lost much of their past glory, the spirit of enterprise and one-upmanship survives. Perhaps what animates them is the unperishable belief that one must never give up but remain ever in bouyant spirits—*Charhdi Kalaa.*

General elections, called some months before they were due, took place in April 2004. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpeyee and his Deputy L. K. Advani expected to return to power with an increased majority and mounted a massive campaign based largely on 'Feel Good' and 'India Shining' because of the progress made in the country during their rule. They were in for a rude shock. As results started coming in the month following, Hindu right wing parties led by the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) suffered an ignominious defeat at the hands of the Congress party led by Mrs Sonia Gandhi. The desperation the BJP launched a virulent campaign asking the country not to accept a foreign-born woman as Prime Minister. Once again Mrs Sonia Gandhi outwitted them by announcing the name of Dr Manmohan Singh as the Congress party's nominee for the post of Prime Minister. The opposition was silenced.

It would appear that there was tacit understanding that while Mrs Gandhi as President of the Congress party would remain in control of political matters, Dr Manmohan Singh would get a free hand to put the country's economy on the right track. Dr Manmohan Singh recalled Montek Singh Ahluwalia who had been Secretary of Finance when he was Finance Minister, and appointed him Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission. Thus the year 2004 saw two Sikhs at the helm of the country's affairs—a notional fulfilment of the prophecy *Raj Karega Khalsa*—The Khalsa Shall Rule.

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PART VI

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Cultural Heritage of the Sikhs

Punjabi Language, Literature, and Painting

Language

There are conflicting views on the origin of the Punjabi language. We are not sure what language the people of the region spoke before the Aryan invasions. Whatever it was, it soon came under the linguistic domination of Sanskrit. Thereafter the Sanskrit of the Aryans mingled with the languages spoken by the Jat tribes which had migrated from Rajasthan into the Punjab. The mélange produced a variety of regional dialects like Hindko, Multani, Pothohari, Majhi, Malwai, Puadhi, Doabi, Dogri and Pahari.

The Punjabi of the eleventh century was then subjected to many other linguistic influences. The Muslim invaders brought Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. The British introduced English. The languages of the conquerors enriched the vocabulary of Punjabi without altering its basic structure. Since the Muslim invaders settled in the Punjab, words of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish found their way into the diction of the peasants. This did not apply to the same extent to English, which was restricted to matters of administration and technology and was used only by the educated classes.

Gurmukhi Script

Scholars still dispute the origin of the Gurmukhi script. The popular belief is that it was invented by the second guru, Angad. This is, however, disproved by the fact that Guru Nanak used the thirty-five

letters in composing his acrostic. From this some scholars have concluded that Nanak was the creator of Gurmukhi letters. Recently, documents written before the time of Nanak have been found which conclusively prove that the thirty-five letters of the alphabet (known also as the *Paiṅtī*-35) now called Gurmukhi were current a long time before the Gurus. Pritam Singh, whose authority is generally accepted, is of the opinion that Gurmukhi, like many other scripts in use in northern India, was derived from Brahmi letters which were in use at the time of Emperor Asoka (3rd century BC), but no precise dates can be fixed about its evolution.

Literature

Punjabi scholars (like the scholars of other languages) vie with each other in pushing back the antiquity of their literature. But there is little real evidence of Punjabi writing before the settlement of the Muslims in the Punjab and the incorporation of their language in the local dialects. The earliest examples of the use of what may be described as Punjabi poetry were heroic ballads (*yars*) which were composed during the Muslim invasions. These heroic ballads were sung to specific tunes, many of which find mention in the compositions of Guru Nanak, for example,

Rāī Kamāl dī vār,
Tuṇḍey asrāje kī vār, etc.

The Sufis

Of the many Sufi orders in India, three flourished in the Punjab and produced a crop of poets: the Chishtiya had Farid Shakarganj (12th century), the Qalandari, Shah Husain (16th century) and the Qadiri, Bulleh Shah, who was a contemporary of Guru Gobind Singh.

Farid Shakarganj is the first great name in Punjabi literature. He made his home in Pak Pattan, where his successors (who also took on the name Farid) continued to reside, write religious verse, and propagate Sufi doctrines. It is not possible to say with certainty which of the many Farids was the author of a particular line of a verse; 112 slokas ascribed to Farid are incorporated in the Granth (see Vol. 1, Appendix 5, pp. 319–21).

Farid's chief preoccupation was with death. He described himself 'lying on the bed of care on the mattress of sorrow under the quilt of

loneliness'; a strain of melancholy is consequently present in much of his writing. In the tradition of the Sufis and the Bhaktas, Farid wrote of a man's search for God in the same terms as a woman's physical longing for her lover. This tradition was continued by the Sikh gurus.

Shah Husain of Lahore was given to drinking, music, dancing, and pederasty. His eccentric ways as well as his verses were on people's lips. Nothing of his writings remains except some *hafts* in mystic strain which were recorded later. The strains of melancholy and abandon run through most of the compositions ascribed to him. 'To whom can I narrate the pain I suffer being separated from the Beloved? The anguish has crazed my mind and my thinking. I have wandered from forest to jungle looking for Him. Yet I have not found Him. The fire smoulders: I search its embers and, through the black smoke, see my Beloved. Sayeth the Faqir Husain, "Lord! behold the fate of those stricken with love!"'

Bulleh Shah (1680–1758), born in a village near Kasur, remains the most quoted and sung sufi poet of the Punjab. He became a disciple of Inayat Shah of the Qadiri order, abandoned the mosque for the Sufi haspice to sing songs of love. 'The first rung on love's ladder is the limbo between life and death,' he wrote, 'when pilgrims turn to Mecca, I regard the face of my Beloved.'

In another verse he writes: 'The law says go to the Mulla to learn rules and regulations. Love says: one word is enough, put away your books of law. Law says: go and bathe five times and worship alone in the temple. Love replies: Your worship is false if you consider yourself separate from your Beloved.'

The sufis lived in villages and their vocabulary was refreshingly rustic. The day-to-day activities of peasants, artisans and their womenfolk, the complicated emotional relationships between the various members of joint families—a sister's love for her brother, the tension between co-wives, the tyranny of a mother-in-law, etc.—gave them the similes and metaphors they needed. The Sikh Gurus, particularly Nanak, made use of these familiar pastimes and situations to convey their message.

Another notable contribution of the sufis was the popularization of certain forms of verse which became distinctive of Punjabi literature, for example, the *kāfi*, *bārā-māh*, and the *siharfi*. *Kāfi* (a verse of four lines in which the first, second and the fourth are in rhyme) was well known to Persian poets and is popular today in Urdu verse. The *bārā-māh*, or the twelve months, gave poets full liberty to describe the beauty of the

seasons and with that convey their message. Some of the richest descriptions of nature in Punjabi poetry owe their origin to the practice of composing *bārā-māh.* That of Guru Nanak in the Ādi Granth is probably the most beautiful of all in the language. The *siharfi,* or the acrostic, takes a letter of the alphabet as its cue. This acrostic was used by the Sikh Gurus but was abandoned soon after them and never revived.

Another notable contribution to Punjabi literature made by Muslim writers were *kissas,* love epics told in verse and sung in every hamlet. The most famous of these were *Heer Rānjhā* by Warris Shah (1735–98), *Sassī-Punnoo, Sohni Mahiwāl* and *Mirzā-Sahibān.* These tragic love stories became the basis of Punjabi fiction.

The Sikh Gurus

Most of the Sikh Gurus were given to versification. The three whose works are most widely read as literature are Nanak, Arjun, and Gobind Singh.

Guru Nanak preached through his poetry, and his works have a didacticism explaining his philosophy of life and exhorting others to a particular way of living. Most didactic poetry suffers from a cramping narrowness imposed by the purpose for which it is written, but Guru Nanak's poetry displays a remarkable freedom of expression. The beauty of pastoral Punjab aroused him to religious and poetic frenzy. The commonplace was for him pregnant with symbolism of moral significance.

Guru Arjun expresses the same deep sentiments in his poetry as Guru Nanak. His verse abounds with jewelled phrases and has a haunting melody produced by the use of alliteration and repetition of words. Guru Arjun is undoubtedly the most sung of all poets of the language.

Guru Gobind Singh was perhaps the most erudite of the Sikh Gurus and was familiar with both Hindu mythology and Islamic theology. He wrote in Braj, Sanskrit, Persian, and Punjabi. Unlike his predecessors, he did not restrict himself to expressing the glory of God; his writings have a moral as well as political significance. The martial spirit which he infused among his followers is expressed in the vigorous poetry of his famous *Zafarnama*—Epistle of Victory—addressed to Emperor Aurang-zeb. His *Jap Sāhīb* is to this day a source of inspiration to his followers.

Notice should also be taken of janam-sakhīs (life-stories) of the Gurus. We have referred to them in Volume 1 as of doubtful historical

value as they were written a long time after the death of Guru Nanak and contradict each other in material points. They are, however, the earliest examples of Punjabi prose available to us.

Contemporary Punjabi Writing

The starting point of contemporary Punjabi writing is Shah Mohammed (1784–1862) who, after Guru Nanak, was the first to write about events of his time. He witnessed the chaos that followed the death of Maharajah Ranjit Singh ending in the Anglo-Sikh wars and the annexation of the Sikh kingdom by the British. He immortalized the heroic but suicidal charge led by Sham Singh Attariwala in the battle of Sabraon. 'They squeezed the blood of Whites as one squeezes juice out of a lemon,' he wrote. 'If only Ranjit Singh were there he would have been proud to see how his Khalsa wielded their swords.' He explained the outcome of the war in words which people still quote to this day:

O Shah Mohammad, without Ranjit, such was our plight
We won our battles, but lost the fight.

For nearly half a century following the commencement of British occupation, little literature was produced in India. It took many years to recover from the effects of the political change and to size up western values. Early English rulers were convinced that all oriental culture was worthless and that the best thing the Indians could do was to adopt the European. One generation of Indians agreed with this opinion and anglicized themselves to the extent that they lost contact with Indian tradition and learning. The next generation discovered the folly and proceeded to blow away the dust of the archives housing the achievements of ancient India. This process took place all over the country. Since the Punjab was the last to be subjected to western complexes, it was the last to shake off their effect. The renaissance in Punjabi writing was consequently somewhat later than in the rest of the country.

Post-annexation Punjabi writing corresponded roughly to the social and political changes produced by the Singh Sabha movement followed by the Akali and the Marxist. In each case, the literary output bore the impress of the problems which faced the protagonists of these movements. There were, however, some writers who remained oblivious to social and political problems and wrote, as it were, for the sake of writing.

The literary output of the Singh Sabha movement is the most important part of its contribution to Sikhism. The person to whom it owes most is Bhai Vir Singh, who recreated interest in Punjabi and established a landmark in the history of the language. Vir Singh (1872–1956) wrote fiction, poetry (notably ghazals) and commentaries on the sacred texts.

Vir Singh's early writing has to be viewed with reference to the social and political conditions at the end of the nineteenth century. His novels, which made him known in millions of homes, were written at a time when the Punjabis were beginning to doubt the achievements of their ancestors. English historians harped on the crude and corrupt Sikh rule, which they had replaced by an 'enlightened' one. Sanskrit scholars belittled the religion of the Sikhs as a poor imitation of the Vedic and ridiculed its forms and symbols as barbarous. Vir Singh's novels, *Sundarī, Vijay Singh, Satwant Kaur* and *Bābā Naudh Singh,* had as their central theme the heroism and chivalry of the Sikhs and the ethical excellence of their religion. This was set in contrast to the servility of the Hindu masses and the oppression of the Pathan and Mughal rulers. The Sikhs devoured Vir Singh's novels with enthusiasm and gratitude. But with the passing of that peculiar mental state, the novels lost their appeal. To the present-day reader, they appear somewhat insipid. Their place is not in literature but in history.

Vir Singh himself gave up writing fiction and turned to translating and explaining the scriptures in a series of pamphlets and in his weekly paper, the *Khālsa Samāchar.* Along with these appeared his poems, which gave him the most honoured place among Punjabi poets.

Vir Singh first experimented in blank verse. A long poem, *Rāna Sūrat Singh,* was published in 1905. The theme, as usual, was religion. His technique and mastery over the language was impressive. No one had successfully written blank verse in Punjabi before; Vir Singh turned out a work of sustained excellence, where alliteration and onomatopoeia, rhythm, and repetition produced a lilting melody with all the languorous sensuousness of a summer afternoon. Thereafter Vir Singh wrote the biographies of two Sikh Gurus, the founder, Nanak, and the last, Guru Gobind Singh. *Kalgidhār Chamatkār,* the life of Guru Gobind, appeared first and was followed three years later by *Guru Nanak Chamatkār.* The lives of the remaining eight Gurus were composed in *Asht Guru Chamatkār.*

In between these biographies, Vir Singh published several collections of verse employing a short metre not used by Punjabi poets. The most popular of these were in the form of *rubāīs* (familiar to the readers

of Omar Khayyam). In these he expressed his philosophy and mysticism, where the love of God and human beings, the spiritual and the sensual, moral and divine, moved in a colourful kaleidoscope, beautiful and baffling. There was always an underlying sense of humility, at times almost masochistic. Bhai Vir Singh had not given up experimenting even in his later years. In *The Vigil,* published posthumously, he recaptured his ability to describe nature and invest physical longing with divine attributes:

Shades of twilight fell,
A gentle gloom had spread.
I mused: maybe today
You would come when it was dark.
I blew out the street lamp,
Put out the light in the niche,
Smothered the taper in the house.

I sat in the dark and was lost in waiting
Maybe tonight You might wish to come
With soft, unsounding tread,
In absolute stillness, in absolute dark.

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Hark! What was that noise?
Was He coming?
I went and looked out of my window,
There was lightning and thunder.

My heart stopped.
Maybe tonight You might come
With fireworks
And with flaming torches!

I rose in a hurry,
Put on the light in the house,
Touched with flame the taper in the niche,
Relit the lamp in the street
With eager, impatient haste.

I mused: Maybe You would come seeing the light,
Maybe you would turn back if the house were in darkness
And I be left waiting for ever and ever.

★ ★ ★

Clouds gathered, black and lowering,
Torn by flashes of lightning,
Then came rain in torrents,
Lanes and streets became muddy swamps.

The lightning is over,
Gone in a flicker of an eyelid
As if it knew my heart's desire.
Even the dark clouds are gone
Baring a sky clean.-washed and shining,
Carrying the moon in its lap like a babe
With the Stars scattered around.
Still I sit and wait.

The moon also awaits.
Look, how the moonbeams have spread
Their shimmering silver over the mud,
Spread a carpet of velvet-white on Your path!

★ ★ ★

The first ray of dawn has lit the sky,
The sparrow twitters,
The morning breeze,
Soft, sweet, fluting,
Enfolds me in its embrace.
Great Giver! Light of the Morning!
Everything, everywhere wakes to life,
Expectant are dawn and daylight.

The longing burgeons with the morning.
The sun is risen
As yesterday it rose and every day.
People have woken from their slumbers
And go about the streets and by-lanes.
Only I sit and wait.
Lord, what else can I do!
Lord, what more can I do!

Two contemporaries of Bhai Vir Singh, Puran Singh (1881–1931) and Dhani Ram 'Chatrik' (1870–1954) deserve mention. Puran Singh, trained in chemistry in which he submitted several research papers, turned to creative literature in Punjabi and English. He was influenced by Walt Whitman and produced some vigorous blank verse in both

languages. Whereas Bhai Vir Singh was a traditionlist and extolled the golden past of the Sikhs, Puran Singh was forward looking, emphasized the Sikhs' Punjabi identity, the universality in the writings of the Sikh Gurus and the role of the self in moulding human destiny. His better known works in English are *Sisters of the Spinning Wheel, Path of Life* and *Spirit Born People.*

Dhani Ram 'Chatrik' published several collections of verse. His lyrics were surfeit with Punjabi colloquialisms—charming in the original but extremely hard to translate.

Poetry remains the most popular form of literary expression to this day. Newspapers and magazines devote a large part of their space to poems, and a symposium (*kavī darbār*) will still draw a larger crowd than a political or a religious meeting. Most of this new poetry is, however, of indifferent quality. Two exceptions are Mohan Singh and Amrita Pritam.

Mohan Singh (1905–78) made a promising start with his *Save Patr* (Green Leaves) and soon came to be recognized as the best of the younger poets. His later work, published after partition, showed a strong left-wing bias, where political emotion was given precedence over poetical form—a malaise which has afflicted a large number of younger writers who label themselves 'progressive'. In the case of Mohan Singh, the first flush of Marxism soon settled down to simple championing of the underdog and an exhortation to work. He was once more able to recapture the spontaneous beauty of his earlier writing:

The pitch-black within the pitcher has burst
Spilling the milk-white of the moonlight.
It is time we talked of a new dawn
And gave up the gossiping of the night.

I grant that autumn's touch
Hath robbed some leaves of their sap.
Sorrow not for what is lost and gone,
With hope anew fill thy lap.

How long on the ancient vault of heaven
Idle fantasies draw and hold them dear?
Come let us caress the earth's tresses,
Come let us talk of something near.

Amrita Pritam (b.1919) published her first collection of poems when she was only seventeen. Her earliest efforts were heavy with criticism of evil social customs. Although she has given up preaching, the hard

lot of Indian women remains the dominant theme in most of her poetry and prose. Her writing has improved steadily as the songstress in her gained dominance over the suffragette but the feminist protest has never been totally silenced. She was influenced by her pseudo-Marxist contemporaries, became 'progressive' and at times propagandist. The great famine of Bengal of 1943 moved her to declaim that 'the talk of love and beauty is talk of idle times and idle people.' But once again the mother in her triumphed over the Marxist and her writing took the form of a soulful dirge rather than an angry denunciation. She became in her own words, 'the chronicler of India's misfortunes'. The internecine massacres of 1947, which took such heavy toll of human life, stirred her to write one of her most memorable poems. She addressed it to Warris Shah and exhorted him to rise from his grave and see the havoc wrought in his own land.

O, comforter of the sorrowing, rise and behold thy Punjab
Its fields are strewn with corpses, blood runs in the Chenab

Amrita Pritam's poetry has been veering towards the sentimental and romantic, with delicate allusions to natural phenomena:

Spring is here again,
Flowers are silken clad
For the festival of colours,
But thou are not here.

The days have lengthened,
The grape is touched with pink,
The scythe hath kissed the corn,
But thou art not here.

Clouds are spread across the sky,
The earth hath opened her palms
And drunk the draught of kindness,
But thou art not here.

The trees are touched with magic,
Lips of the winds that kiss the woodlands
Are full of honey,
But thou art not here.

Bewitching seasons have come and gone,
Many moons have woven plaits
On the black tresses of night,
But thou are not here.

Today again the stars did stay
In life's mansion, even now
The lamps of beauty are still aflame,
But thou art not here.

Rays of the sun did also whisper,
In the deep slumbers of the night
The moon is ever awake,
But thou art not here.

Amrita Pritam has not achieved the same distinction in her fiction as she has in her poetry. Her characterization is often weak and her plots so contrived as to appear manifestly unreal. The Indian film industry has exercised on her, as it has on many Indian writers of her generation, a most baneful influence; the narratives of their novels are interspersed with song, and people find themselves in situations which seldom obtain in real life in India. These shortcomings are evident in her most popular novel, *Dr Dev.* Amrita is at her best in *Pinjar*—The Skeleton. *The Skeleton* is the story of a Hindu girl, Pooro, who is abducted and forcibly married to a Muslim and whose hatred for her ravisher gradually turns to love. Together they help Hindu, and Sikh refugees to escape from Pakistan to India. Through Pooro, the chief character of the story, Amrita expresses her resentment against social conventions, male lustfulness, and sorrowful resignation to fate which, according to her, is the lot of Indian womanhood.

A contemporary of Mohan Singh and Amrita Pritam was the revolutionary agnostic poet Darshan Singh Awara. Since he intended to communicate with the illiterate masses, his poems were propagandist and meant to be recited at political meetings.

Of a different genre is Harbhajan Singh (b.1920) who distinguished himself by use of new diction and lyricism. His better known works include *Adhraini* (Midnight) and *Na Dhuppe Na Chhāven* (Neither in Sunshine Nor in Shade).

Two poets deserve mention as trendsetters for the modern generation of writers: Tara Singh Kamil, a carpenter by profession, also representative of the reaction to obscurantism which had at one time come into vogue. He is a favourite of the kavī darbārs, where rapport between the bard and his audience is essential. The *Lovers' Plight* is a sample of his technique:

In the months of May and June,
In the summer's heat, on a hot afternoon,

Like a fluff of thistledown floating in the air
Casting its shadow on a piece of straw
For a fleeting moment; so hath
Thy love been to me.

Beloved mine! Thy face is like the moon
New risen in the hours of early dawn.
I have treasured the memory of Thy love.
As traveller numb and cold
Seeks shelter in the wayside hut, and
When rain and sleet beat upon its thatched roof
He lights a fire, guards the glowing embers
In his embrace and lets the dirty water
Leaking through the roof drip upon his back,
So have I cherished thy love.

Shiv Kumar Batalvi (1936–73) burst on the Punjabi literary scene like a meteor. He was a raffish young man with his roots in the dung heaps of his village and steeped in folklore and mythology. He was a born poet; whatever he wrote on turned into a lyrical masterpiece. His best known work, *Loona,* was based on the story of Prince Pooran Bhagat, son of King Salvathan. In the epic, on rebuffing his step-mother's (Loona's) advances to him, she instigated her old husband to torture his son for having coveted her. In Shiv Batalvi's version, Loona, instead of being the villain, is depicted as a lusty young woman frustrated by her ageing husband's impotence and yearning for love from her handsome stepson. *Loona* won immediate acclaim. Shiv Batalvi was the youngest writer to have been given the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1967. He drank himself to death before he was thirty-seven. 'The best time to die is in the fullness of youth,' he wrote.

Belles Lettres, Fiction, and Drama

The outstanding figures in Punjabi prose are Gurbaksh Singh (1895–1977), editor of the monthly magazine, *Prīt Larī* and Dr Balbir Singh, younger brother of the poet, Vir Singh. Gurbaksh Singh was closely associated with the Communist party and had been the main influence on many of the Punjab's younger writers. His manifestly propagandist writing was, however, redeemed by a felicity of style and diction. Gurbaksh Singh wrote novels, plays, short stories, and essays. Dr Balbir Singh was, like his brother, deeply religious; he was also the

most erudite of contemporary Sikh writers. His essays display a knowledge of both European and Sanskrit literature and are written in chaste and simple Punjabi. He published two books *Kalam dī Karāmāt* (The Miracle of the Pen) and *Lamī Nadar* (Grace Abounding)—both of which were acclaimed by critics.

The novel as a form of writing came somewhat late to the Punjab. The best known contemporary novelist, Nanak Singh (1897–197?), wrote over two dozen novels and remains the most widely read Punjabi writer. His language is of the less educated class of Indians and is interspersed with English words; his plots are contrived.

Punjabi literature's most notable achievement is in its short stories. By introducing modern techniques, the Punjabi writer has been able to develop the tradition of the fable. Sant Singh Sekhon (b.1908) abandoned the straightforward narrative and made dexterous use of illusion, understatement, and auto-suggestion. Kartar Singh Duggal (b.1919) is the leading writer of short stories and introduced the dialect of Rawalpindi district into Punjabi writing. His collections *Sver Sār* (Early Morning) and *Navān Ghar* (The New Home) are noteworthy. In the same way Kulwant Singh Virk injected the dialect of the Jats of Majha into his short stories. Virk's later work became somewhat sophisticated and he began to write of the lower middle-class life in small towns.

A significant modernization in the style of short-story writing has come with the emergence of Ajeet Cour (b.1934). Several of her dozen or so novelettes and collections of short stories have been translated into English, Urdu and Hindi and published in prestigious journals. In her work is brevity, wit, satire and subdued pathos without any indulgence in hyperbole or purple prose. For the first time we get a candid exposure of human emotions and physical relationships. Her autobiography *Khana Badosh* (Homeless Wanderer) tells of her broken marriage, the death of her younger child and the struggle for survival of a young divorcee in a venally masculine society. It won her the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1986.

The most neglected aspect of Punjabi writing is drama. Only recently did the Punjab build its first proper theatre at Chandigarh; it still has no professional actors or producers. The Punjabi dramatists' exposition has been confined to writing plays for broadcasting or suffering them to be performed by amateurs at drama festivals. Nevertheless, Balwant Gargi had some of his plays translated and enacted in the Soviet Union, and United States, Canada and on TV.

Future Prospects of Punjabi

Most Sikh politicians have tried at one time or the other to write or versify, for example, Master Tara Singh, Gurmukh Singh Musafir, Sohan Singh Josh, Hira Singh 'Dard,' Teja. Singh Swatantra. They have novels, short stories, or collections of poems to their credit. This emphasis on literary prowess was undoubtedly one of the factors behind the united demand for official recognition of Punjabi, the setting up of a Punjabi-speaking zone and a Punjabi Akademi. Official recognition has thus compensated for the loss sustained by the recognition of Urdu in Pakistan and the patronage of Hindi in India.

Punjabi literature continues to depend largely on Sikh writers using the Gurmukhi script. The dialects are disappearing; with use of a more standardized diction, Punjabi is beginning to lose some of its rustic vigour. These shortcomings are being partly offset by the production of translations of classics of other languages and the infusion of alien concepts and literary forms. Punjabi writers have to compete with Hindi and Urdu as well as English and French writings translated into Punjabi. Impatience with the poor standard of contemporary writing has also produced school of critics who have broken the tradition of restricting appraisal to praise and have begun to demand better work from the novelists and the poets. The yeast has begun to ferment; Punjabi is on the eve of its long awaited renaissance.

Sikh Painting

A Sikh school of painting came into existence as the Sikhs rose to power. In the early stages, it consisted largely of calligraphists who produced *gutkās*—books of daily prayer *(nit nem)*. The pages of these prayer books were garnished with floral designs and paintings of the Gurus at appropriate pages. Most of these painters followed the techniques and patterns of the schools of painting which had evolved under the patronage of the Rajput chieftains around the hills of Kulu, Kangra, and Basohli. When the Sikhs became rulers of the Punjab, painters flocked to their courts. In addition to the paintings of religious themes, they made portraits of their patrons and other pictures—often erotic—for their patrons' delectation. Many Sikh chiefs commissioned artists to paint frescoes in their palaces.

Maharajah Ranjit Singh, despite his philistine upbringing, was a generous patron of the arts. After he subdued Raja Sansar Chand of

Kangra in 1809, there was a virtual exodus of painters from the hills to the plains of the Punjab. Hari Singh Nalwa, the Bedis of Una, the Attariwalas, and the Raja of Kapurthala shared Ranjit Singh's interest in painting and commissioned illustrated books, portraits, and frescoes. Ranjit Singh employed these artists to do the frescoes and the other decorations in the Golden Temple at Amritsar; the most distinguished of the craftsmen employed was one Kehar Singh. Much of the pietra dura designs and frescoes in the Golden Temple are the work of this man. The painters of the temple were in all probability also responsible for the frescoes in Ranjit Singh's mausoleum in Lahore.

Kehar Singh created a school of *naqāśes*—craftsmen—who continued to work in the many appurtenances of the Golden Temple. He was also a gifted caricaturist and displayed his skill in portraits of nihangs and other Punjabi rustic types. Gyan Singh (1883–1953) and his sons after him continued the tradition of Kehar Singh and spent their lives working in the Golden Temple.

The most outstanding Indian painter of recent times was the Sikh, Amrita Shergil (1911–41). Amrita was the daughter of Umrao Singh Shergil (elder brother of Sunder Singh Majithia) and his Hungarian wife. She was trained in Paris, and her early work shows the influence of French masters, chiefly Gaugin. When she returned to India, she jettisoned the European technqiue and became an ardent traditionalist. Her best work is reminiscent of the Rajasthani and Kangra schools but is executed on a large canvas and in brighter oranges and whites. Amrita Shergil died at the age of thirty. Whatever she did in those short years has become the most coveted national treasure of India. Her canvases hang in the National Gallery in New Delhi.

Contemporary Sikh artists have not distinguished themselves, The best known are Sobha Singh and S. G. Thakur Singh. Sobha Singh painted pictures of the Sikh Gurus and illustrated themes from Punjabi folklore. S. G. Thakur Singh was the head of an Academy of Arts in Amritsar. He painted both portraits and landscapes. His forte was photographic likenesses of the subject. Following in his tradition is a young artist, Kirpal Singh, who has illustrated macabre incidents in Sikh history. Kirpal Singh's paintings are exhibited in the picture gallery attached to the Golden Temple.

Mention should be made of Gurcharan Singh, regarded as the father of modern Indian pottery. He is in his mid-30s, but has trained a large number of younger potters to carry on the tradition.

A large number of young Sikh painters and sculptors are at work in different parts of the world. It is difficult to single out the outstanding. Jaswant Singh (b. 1922), who received no formal training, has evolved a style of his own in abstract painting, a visual rendering of Indian rāgās. Arpana Caur (b. 1954), the daughter of the writer Ajeet Cour, is among the most talked about painters of the younger generation. Her works have been exhibited in all major Indian cities, the Soviet Union, England, the United States and many other countries. Although inspired by miniatures, she paints in bold striking colours depicting modern themes like the anti-Sikh pogrom in Delhi in November 1984. In 1986 she won the prestigious International Triennale Award, the youngest woman to do so.

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Appendix 2

Treaty Between the British Government and the State of Lahore, 9 March 1846

Whereas the treaty of amity and concord, which was concluded between the British Government and the late Maharajah Runjeet Sing, the Ruler of Lahore, in 1809, was broken by the unprovoked aggression, on the British Provinces, of the Sikh Army, in December last; and Whereas, on that occasion, by the Proclamation, dated 13th December, the territories then in the occupation of the Maharajah of Lahore, on the left or British bank of the River Sutlej, were confiscated and annexed to the British Provinces; and since that time hostile operations have been prosecuted by the two Governments, the one against the other, which have resulted in the occupation of Lahore by the British troops; and Whereas it has been determined that, upon certain conditions, peace shall be re-established between the two Governments, the following treaty of peace between the Honorable English East India Company and Maharajah Dhuleep Sing Bahadoor, and his children, heirs and successors, has been concluded on the part of the Honorable Company by Frederick Currie, Esquire, and Brevet-Major Henry Montgomery Lawrence, by virtue of full powers to that effect vested in them by the Right Hon'ble Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., one of Her Britannic Majesty's Most Honorable Privy Council, Governor-General, appointed by the Honorable Company to direct and control all their affairs in the East Indies, and on the part of His Highness Maharajah Dhuleep Sing by Bhaee Ram Sing, Rajah Lal Sing, Sirdar Tej Sing, Sirdar Chuttur Sing Attareewalla, Sirdar Runjore Sing Majeethia, Dewan Deena Nath and Fakeer Noorooddeen, vested with full powers and authority on the part of His Highness.

Article 1

There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the British Government on the one part, and Maharajah Dhuleep Sing, his heirs and successors on the other.

Article 2

The Maharajah of Lahore renounces for himself, his heirs and successors, all claim to, or connection with, the territories lying to the south of the River Sutlej, and engages never to have any concern with those territories or inhabitants thereof.

Article 3

The Maharajah cedes to the Honorable Company, in perpetual sovereignty, all his forts, territories and rights in the Doab or country, hill and plain, situated between the Rivers Beas and Sutlej.

Article 4

The British Government having demanded from the Lahore State, as indemnification for the expenses of the war, in addition to the cession of territory described in Article 3, payment of one and half crore of rupees, and the Lahore Government, being unable to pay the whole of this sum at this time, or to give security satisfactory to the British Government for its eventual payment, the Maharajah cedes to the Honorable Company, in perpetual sovereignty, as equivalent for one crore of rupees, all his forts, territories, rights and interests in the hill countries, which are situated between the Rivers Beas and Indus, including the Provinces of Cashmere and Hazarah.

Article 5

The Maharajah will pay to the British Government the sum of 50 lakhs of rupees on or before the ratification of this Treaty.

Article 6

The Maharajah engages to disband the mutinous troops of the Lahore Army, taking from them their arms—and His Highness agrees to reorganise the Regular or Aeen Regiments of Infantry, upon the system,

and according to the Regulations as to pay and allowances, observed in the time of the late Maharajah Runjeet Sing. The Maharajah further engages to pay up all arrears to the soldiers that are discharged, under the provisions of this Article.

Article 7

The Regular Army of the Lahore State shall henceforth be limited to 25 Battalions of Infantry, consisting of 800 bayonets each—with twelve thousand cavalry—this number at no time to be exceeded without the concurrence of the British Government. Should it be necessary at any time—for any special cause—that this force should be increased, the cause shall be fully explained to the British Government, and when the special necessity shall have passed, the regular troops shall be again reduced to the standard specified in the former clause of this Article.

Article 8

The Maharajah will surrender to the British Government all the guns—thirty-six in number—which have been pointed against the British Troops—and which, having been placed on the right bank of the River Sutlej, were not captured at the Battle of Subraon.

Article 9

The control of the Rivers Beas and Sutlej, with the continuations of the latter river, commonly called the Gurrah and the Punjnud, to the confluence of the Indus at Mithunkote—and the control of the Indus from Mithunkote to the borders of Beloochistan, shall, in respect to tolls and ferries, rest with the British Government. The provisions of this Article shall not interfere with the passage of boats belonging to the Lahore Government on the said rivers, for the purposes of traffic or the conveyance of passengers up and down their course. Regarding the ferries between the two countries respectively, at the several ghats of the said rivers, it is agreed that the British Government, after defraying all the expenses of management and establishments, shall account to the Lahore Government for one-half of the net profits of the ferry collections. The provisions of this Article have no reference to the ferries on that part of the River Sutlej which forms the boundary of Bhawulpore and Lahore respectively.

Article 10

If the British Government should, at any time, desire to pass troops through the territories of His Highness the Maharajah, for the protection of the British Territories, or those of their Allies, the British Troops shall, on such special occasion, due notice being given, be allowed to pass through the Lahore Territories. In such case the Officers of the Lahore State will afford facilities in providing supplies and boats for the passage of rivers, and the British Government will pay the full price of all such provisions and boats, and will make fair compensation for all private property that may be endamaged. The British Government will, moreover, observe all due consideration to the religious feelings of the inhabitants of those tracts through which the army may pass.

Article 11

The Maharajah engages never to take or to retain in his service any British subject—nor the subject of any European or American State—without the consent of the British Government.

Article 12

In consideration of the services rendered by Rajah Golab Sing, of Jummoo, to the Lahore State, towards procuring the restoration of the relations of amity between the Lahore and British Governments, the Maharajah hereby agrees to recognise the Independent Sovereignty of Rajah Golab Sing, in such territories and districts in the hills as may be made over to the said Rajah Golab Sing, by separate Agreement between himself and the British Government, with the dependencies thereof, which may have been in the Rajah's possession since the time of the late Maharajah Khurruck Sing, and the British Government, in consideration of the good conduct of Rajah Golab Sing, also agrees to recognize his independence in such territories, and to admit him to the privileges of a separate Treaty with the British Government.

Article 13

In the event of any dispute or difference arising between the Lahore State and Rajah Golab Sing, the same shall be referred to the arbitration of the British Government, and by its decision the Maharajah engages to abide.

Article 14

The limits of the Lahore Territories shall not be, at any time, changed without the concurrence of the British Government.

Article 15

The British Government will not exercise any interference in the internal administration of the Lahore State—but in all cases or questions which may be referred to the British Government, the Governor-General will give the aid of his advice and good offices for the furtherance of the interests of the Lahore Government.

Article 16

The subjects of either State shall, on visiting the territories of the other, be on the footing of the subjects of the most favoured nation.

This Treaty, consisting of sixteen articles, has been this day settled by Frederick Currie, Esquire, and Brevet-Major Henry Montgomery Lawrence acting under the directions of the Right Hon'ble Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., Governor-General, on the part of the British Government, and by Bhaee Ram Sing, Rajah Lal Sing, Sirdar Tej Sing, Sirdar Chuttur Sing Attareewalla, Sirdar Runjore Sing Majeethia, Dewan Deena Nath, and Fuqueer Noorooddeen, on the part of the Maharajah Dhuleep Sing, and the said Treaty has been this day ratified by the seal of the Right Hon'ble Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., Governor-General, and by that of His Highness Maharajah Dhuleep Sing.

Done at Lahore, this ninth day of March, in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-six, corresponding with the 10th day of Rubbee-ool-awul, 1262 Hijree, and ratified on the same date.

(Sd.) H. Hardinge

(Sd.) Maharajah Dhuleep Sing
Bhaee Ram Sing
Rajah Lal Sing
Sirdar Tej Sing
Sirdar Chuttur Sing Attareewalla
Sirdar Runjore Sing Majeethia
Dewan Deena Nath
Fuqueer Noorooddeen

Appendix 3

Articles of Agreement Concluded Between the British Government and the Lahore Durbar on 11 March 1846

Whereas the Lahore Government has solicited the Governor-General to leave a British force at Lahore, for the protection of the Maharajah's person and of the Capital, till the reorganization of the Lahore army, according to the provisions of Article 6 of the Treaty of Lahore, dated the 9th instant, and Whereas the Governor-General has, on certain conditions, consented to the measure; and Whereas it is expedient that certain matters concerning the territories ceded by Articles 3 and 4 of the aforesaid Treaty should be specifically determined, the following eight Articles of Agreement have this day been concluded between the aforementioned contracting parties.

Article 1

The British Government shall leave at Lahore, till the close of the current year, A.D. 1846, such force as shall seem to the Governor-General adequate for the purpose of protecting the person of the Maharajah and the inhabitants of the City of Lahore, during the reorganisation of the Sikh army, in accordance with the provisions of Article 6 of the Treaty of Lahore. That force to be withdrawn at any convenient time before the expiration of the year, if the object to be fulfilled shall, in the opinion of the Durbar, have been attained—but the force shall not be detained at Lahore beyond the expiration of the current year.

Article 2

The Lahore Government agrees that the force left at Lahore for the purpose specified in the foregoing Article, shall be placed in full possession of the Fort and the City of Lahore, and that the Lahore troops shall be removed from within the city. The Lahore Government engages to furnish convenient quarters for the Officers and men of the said force and to pay to the British Government all the extra expenses in regard to the said force; which may be incurred by the British Government, in consequence of the troops being employed away from their own cantonments and in Foreign Territory.

Article 3

The Lahore Government engages to apply itself immediately and earnestly to the reorganisation of its army according to the prescribed conditions, and to communicate fully with the British Authorities left at Lahore, as to the progress of such reorganisation, and as to the location of the troops.

Article 4

If the Lahore Government fails in the performance of the conditions of the foregoing Article, the British Government shall be at liberty to withdraw the force from Lahore at any time before the expiration of the period specified in Article 1.

Article 5

The British Government agrees to respect the bona fide rights of those jaghiredars, within the territories ceded by Articles 3 and 4 of the Treaty of Lahore, dated 9th instant, who were attached to the families of the late Maharajahs Runjeet Sing, Kurruk Sing and Shere Sing; and the British Government will maintain those jaghiredars in their bona fide possessions during their lives.

Article 6

The Lahore Government shall receive the assistance of the British Local Authorities in recovering the arrears of revenue justly due to the Lahore Government from the kardars and managers in the territories

ceded by the provisions of Articles 3 and 4 of the Treaty of Lahore, to the close of the khureef harvest of the current year, viz. 1902 of the Sumbut bikramajeet.

Article 7

The Lahore Government shall be at liberty to remove, from the forts, in the territories specified in the foregoing Article, all treasure and State property, with the exception of guns. Should, however, the British Government desire to retain any part of the said property, they shall be at liberty to do so, paying for the same at a fair valuation, and the British Officers shall give their assistance to the Lahore Government in disposing on the spot of such part of the aforesaid property as the Lahore Government may not wish to remove, and the British Officers may not desire to retain.

Article 8

Commissioners shall be immediately appointed by the two Governments to settle and lay down the boundary between the two States, as defined by Article 4 of the Treaty of Lahore, dated 9th March 1846.

(Sd.) H. Hardinge

(Sd.) Maharajah Dhuleep Sing
Bhaee Ram Sing
Rajah Lal Sing
Sirdar Tej Sing
Sirdar Chuttur Sing Attareewalla
Sirdar Runjore Sing Majeethia
Dewan Deena Nath
Fuqueer Noorooddeen

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Appendix 4

Articles of Agreement Concluded Between the British Government and the Lahore Durbar on 16 December 1846

Whereas the Lahore Durbar and the principal Chiefs and Sirdars of the State have in express terms communicated to the British Government their anxious desire that the Governor-General should give his aid and assistance to maintain the administration of the Lahore State during the minority of Maharajah Dulleep Sing, and have declared this measure to be indispensable for the maintenance of the Government; and Whereas the Governor-General has, under certain conditions, consented to give the aid and assistance solicited, the following Articles of Agreement, in modification of the Articles of Agreement executed at Lahore on the 11th March last, have been concluded on the part of the British Government by Frederick Currie, Esquire, Secretary to Government of India, and Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Montgomery Lawrence, C.B., Agent to the Governor-General, North West Frontier, by virtue of full powers to that effect vested in them by the Right Hon'ble Viscount Hardinge, G.C.B., Governor-General, and on the part of His Highness Maharajah Dulleep Sing, by Sirdar Tej Sing, Sirdar Shere Sing, Dewan Dena Nath, Fukeer Nooroodeen, Rai Kishen Chund, Sirdar Runjore Sing Majethea, Sirdar Utter Sing Kaleewalla, Bhaee Nidhan Sing, Sirdar Khan Sing Majethea, Sirdar Shumshere Sing, Sirdar Lal Sing Morarea, Sirdar Kher Sing Sindhanwalla, Sirdar Urjun Sing Rungrungalea; acting with the unanimous consent and concurrence of the Chiefs and Sirdars of the State assembled at Lahore.

Article 1

All and every part of the Treaty of peace between the British Government and the State of Lahore, bearing date the 9th day of March 1846, except in so far as it may be temporarily modified in respect to clause 15 of the said Treaty by this engagement, shall remain binding upon the two Governments.

Article 2

A British Officer, with an efficient establishment of assistants, shall be appointed by the Governor-General to remain at Lahore, which officer shall have full authority to direct and control all matters in every Department of the State.

Article 3

Every attention shall be paid in conducting the administration to the feelings of the people, to preserving the national institutions and customs, and to maintaining the just rights of all classes.

Article 4

Changes in the mode and details of administration shall not be made except when found necessary for effecting the objects set forth in the foregoing Clause, and for securing the just dues of the Lahore Government. These details shall be conducted by Native officers as at present, who shall be appointed and superintended by a Council of Regency composed of leading Chiefs and Sirdars acting under the control and guidance of the British Resident.

Article 5

The following persons shall in the first instance constitute the Council of Regency, viz., Sirdar Tej Sing, Sirdar Shere Sing Attareewalla, Dewan Dena Nath, Fukeer Nooroodeen, Sirdar Runjore Sing Majethea, Bhaee Nidhan Sing, Sirdar Utter Sing Kaleewalla, Sirdar Shumshere Sing Sindhanwalla, and no change shall be made in the persons thus nominated, without the consent of the British Resident, acting under the orders of the Governor-General.

Article 6

The administration of the country shall be conducted by this Council of Regency in such manner as may be determined on by themselves in consultation with the British Resident, who shall have full authority to direct and control the duties of every department.

Article 7

A British Force of such strength and numbers, and in such positions as the Governor-General may think fit, shall remain at Lahore for the protection of the Maharajah and the preservation of the peace of the country.

Article 8

The Governor-General shall be at liberty to occupy with British soldiers any fort or military post in the Lahore Territories, the occupation of which may be deemed necessary by the British Government, for the security of the capital or for maintaining the peace of the country.

Article 9

The Lahore State shall pay to the British Government twenty-two lakhs of new Nanuck Shahee Rupees of full tale and weight per annum for the maintenance of this force, and to meet the expenses incurred by the British Government. Such sum to be paid by two instalments, or 1,320,000 in May or June, and 880,000 in November or December of each year.

Article 10

Inasmuch as it is fitting that Her Highness the Maharanee, the mother of Maharajah Dulleep Sing, should have a proper provision made for the maintenance of herself and dependents, the sum of one lakh and fifty thousand rupees shall be set apart annually for that purpose, and shall be at Her Highness' disposal.

Article 11

The provisions of this Engagement shall have effect during the minority of His Highness Maharajah Dulleep Sing, and shall cease and

terminate on His Highness attaining the full age of sixteen years, or on the 4th September of the year 1854, but it shall be competent to the Governor-General to cause the arrangement to cease at any period prior to the coming of age of His Highness, at which the Governor-General and the Lahore Durbar may be satisfied that the interposition of the British Government is no longer necessary for maintaining the Government of His Highness the Maharajah.

This Agreement, consisting of eleven Articles, was settled and executed at Lahore by the Officers and Chiefs and Sirdars above named, on the 16th day of December 1846.

(Sd.) F. Currie
H. M. Lawrence

(Sd.) Sirdar Tej Sing
Sirdar Shere Sing
Dewan Dena Nath
Fukeer Nooroodeen
Rai Kishen Chund
Sirdar Runjore Sing Majethea
Sirdar Utter Sing Kaleewalla
Bhaee Nidhan Sing
Sirdar Khan Sing Majethea
Sirdar Shumshere Sing
Sirdar Lal Sing Morarea
Sirdar Kher Sing Sindhanwalla
Sirdar Urjun Sing Rungrungalea

(Sd.) Hardinge
Dulleep Sing

Ratified by the Right Honorable the Governor-General, at Bhyrowal Ghat on the left bank of the Beas, the twenty-sixth day of December One Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty-six.

(Sd.) F. Currie,
Secretary to the
Government of India

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Appendix 5

Mr Suhrawardy's Statement on the Riots, 30 September 1946

'I am deeply disturbed to find that the suspicion and distrust amongst Muslims against Sikhs still continues. I still hear rumours circulated from time to time and in various localities that the Sikhs are congregating in certain places for the purpose of attacking Muslims. Each one of these reports has been investigated and has been found to be false. Places supposed to be full of Sikhs armed for the purpose have been searched and the report has been found to be absolutely without substance.

'I have personally looked into many of these cases and can definitely state that these reports are absolutely false and are merely the outcome of panic. Sikhs went about in their taxis and their buses during those dangerous five days for the purpose of rescuing their women and children and removing their belongings. Immediately rumours got abroad that they were moving about for the purpose of attacking Muslim mohallas. Not one Muslim mohalla has been attacked by the Sikhs thus far, and yet the rumours still go on.

'There are stories of one or two Sikhs here and there in those days of carnage having taken part in the riots. Some of these may be true and others may not. But that does not mean that the Sikh community is up against the Muslims.

'I have been in constant touch with the Sikh leaders and I am absolutely convinced regarding their bona-fides and the attempts that they are making to keep themselves neutral and not to be involved in any kind of dispute. More than that during the riots they have saved

as many as 5000 Muslims from dangerous areas and carried these Muslims to safe places. Surely they deserve something better from the Muslims than this suspicion and distrust and hostility against them.

'Small incidents take place here and there and misunderstanding grows. Let us give some examples which may help to clear the situation. A report is received that Muslims are being assaulted in a Hindu area; a bus comes along which is driven by a Sikh driver, and this bus contains both Hindus and Muslims; the Muslims stop the bus and request the Muslims to get out and not to go into the dangerous area; the Hindus in the bus think that the Muslims are being taken out for the purpose of assaulting the Hindus, and they urge upon the Sikh driver to drive fast; the Sikh driver drives fast and the Muslims outside think that he is running away with some Muslim so that he may be killed in the Hindu area, and they start throwing stones. This is how misunderstanding arises.

'We know of one case where a Sikh driver did not stop at a particular place as he got into a panic seeing a Muslim crowd standing by; the Muslim in the bus who wanted the Sikh driver to stop thought that the Sikh driver was running away with him, he jumped out of the bus and injured himself. Immediately rumours got about that bodies had been thrown out of the bus, that Sikhs had killed Muslims, that Sikhs had attacked Muslims with knives and so on.

'All this must cease. My Muslim brethren must believe me when I say that this propaganda against the Sikhs is false and must stop at once, and the Sikh drivers whether of buses or of taxis must not be stoned or molested in any way. In fact I should very much like that attempts should be made by the Muslim localities to contact Sikh leaders who are their neighbours so that mutual confidence may be restored.

'I hope that Muslims will respond to this appeal wholeheartedly and stop molesting the Sikhs; and also stop this anti-Sikh propaganda which has no basis in fact and which must be put an end to at once for the sake of peace and general restoration of confidence.'

The Statesman,
1 October 1946.

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Appendix 6

Anandpur Sahib Resolution

Policy and Programme of the Shiromani Akali Dal adopted at Shri Anandpur Sahib on 16–17 October 1973.

Principles

(a) The Shiromani Akali Dal is the supreme body of the Sikh Panth and as such is fully authorized to represent and lead them. The basis of this organization depends on mutual relations, aspirations of man and his relations with the creator.

(b) These principles are embodied in the doctrine of Guru Nanak Dev, viz, *Nam Japo* (God Worship), *Kirat Karo* (Do hard labour) and *Wand Chhako* (Share your hard earnings with others).

Aims

The Shiromani Akali Dal shall strive for the fulfilment of following aims:

(a) Propogation of Religion and Sikh tenets and condemnation of atheism.

(b) Maintaining the realization of Panth's independent entity and creation of such an environment where Sikh sentiment can find its full expression.

(c) Eradication of poverty and hunger through an equitable economic structure-increase in wealth and end of all exploitation.

(d) Removal of illiteracy, untouchability and casteism as laid down in Sikh scriptures.

(e) Ending ill-health and sickness—condemnation of intoxicants—so that the community is inspired to protect the Nation.

PART I

The Shiromani Akali Dal considers it a primary task to inculcate a sense of Divinity among the Sikhs so that they are proud of being the same. In order to accomplish the same, the Akali Dal will initiate the following programme:

(a) Preaching the one-ness of God, worship, belief in the Ten Gurus and the Holy Granth, and information about the doctrines explained by them for implementation by the Sikhs.

(b) For the successful preaching of Sikh Divinity, philosophy, tenets and kirtan, etc. production of good preachers, singers, Dhadis and poets from Sikh Missionary Colleges so that preachers are able to propogate freely in India and abroad, villages and cities, schools and colleges, etc.

(c) The work of Amrit Parchar (Baptism) to be undertaken at a larger scale, particularly among the schools and colleges. Study circles of college professors and students to be organized for this purpose.

(d) Revival of Daswandh (donation of one-tenth of income) among the Sikhs.

(e) Respect and honour the Sikh historians, intellectuals, writers, Parcharaks, Granthis, etc. and provide facilities to raise the standards of their life, training and work.

(f) In order to streamline the Gurdwara administration, arrangements to be made for the training of employees, maintenance of Gurdwara buildings and issuing of necessary directives to the SGPC members in this behalf.

(g) Correct printing of scriptures, research of old and new Sikh History, translation of scriptures and preparation of clean literature of Sikh principles.

(h) Strive for the enactment of new All India Gurdwara Act under which all gurdwaras in the country are managed efficiently and endeavour that old institutions of the Sikhs like Udasis, Nirmale, etc. become an integral part of the Sikh society.

(i) The Managers of all Gurdwaras in the world to be woven in a single chain in order to have effective benefits of the common means of religious propaganda.

(j) To secure 'Open Darshan' of Sri Nankana Sahib and other Gurdwaras which have been snatched away from the panth.

PART II

Political

The panthic political aim is definitely based on the directive of the Tenth Guru, which is engraved on the pages of Sikh History and is in the mind of the Khalsa Panth—Its aim is, Khalsa Ji Ka Bol Bala.

To this end in view, the Shiromani Akali Dal will strive and wage struggles for the following:

1.(a) The areas which have been taken away from Punjab or have been intentionally kept apart e.g. Dalhousie from district Gurdaspur; Chandigarh; Pinjore, Kalka and Ambala City in district Ambala; whole Una Tehsil of Hoshiarpur district; 'Desh' ilaqa of Nalagarh; Shahabad block of district Karnal; Sub Tehsils of Guhla and Tohana, Rattia Block of district Hissar and Sirsa Tehsil, 6 Tehsils of district Ganganagar of Rajasthan and the contiguous Punjabi-speaking Sikh-populated areas, should be immediately merged, with Punjab under one administrative unit;

(b) In this new Punjab, the Central intervention should be restricted to Defence, Foreign Affairs, Post and Telegraphs, Currency and Railways. The rest of the departments should be under the direct control of Punjab;

(c) Effective arrangements should be made to safeguard the interest of the minority Sikh community living outside Punjab, so that they do not fall a prey to any discrimination.

2. Shiromani Akali Dal will also try that the Indian Constitution becomes Federal in the real sense and all States are equally represented at the Centre.

3. The Shiromani Akali Dal feels that the foreign policy of the Congress Government is useless and harmful for the country and the Nation as a whole. It will strive for good relations with all neighbouring countries, particularly where the Sikhs reside or where their religious

shrines are found. Our foreign policy should not be tagged along with any other country.

4. To ensure justice for Sikh employees at the Centre and States and to raise an effective voice against injustice meted out to them, is an important part of the Shiromani Akali Dal's programme. Particularly in the Defence Services, efforts will be made to maintain the conventions of the Sikhs and the demands of Sikh soldiers would be constantly kept in view. Shiromani Akali Dal will also try that the 'Kirpan' (sword) becomes an integral part of the Sikh soldiers' uniform.

5. Creation of a favourable atmosphere for the rehabilitation of ex-servicemen, provision of necessary concessions and safe-guards for their rights so that they live a life of self-respect.

6. The Shiromani Akali Dal feels that every man or woman, who has not been sentenced by a court of law, should be allowed to keep a fire arm without license.

7. The Shiromani Akali Dal favours a policy of prohibition and ban on smoking at public places.

ECONOMIC POLICY AND PROGRAMME OF SHIROMANI AKALI DAL AS APPROVED BY THE WORKING COMMITTEE IN ITS MEETING HELD AT *SHRI ANANDPUR SAHIB, ON 17TH OCTOBER 1973.*

Though Indian economy is essentially an agrarian economy and no political force which is committed to building of a social order based on justice can ignore this, the crux of the whole problem is that the main lever of economy is in the hands of the big business, the capitalist and the monopolist class. It is precisely this class which has grown rich during twenty-six years of freedom though benefits of economic growth have been shared by other classes too. It is this class which essentially weilds political power. Therefore, any effort of building a new social order through peaceful means has to be directed in breaking the stronghold of this section of the population both on economy and politics.

The Akali Dal stands for removal of disparity between the rich and the poor, both in urban and rural areas. It, however, wants that the first attack on the concentration of wealth should be made on those who really control the economy. In the rural areas too the Akali Dal stands for the weaker sections of the population, scheduled castes, backward landless tillers, poor peasants and middle peasants. It therefore, stands for rationalisation of land legislation in such a manner that all

lands of above 30 standard acres should be taken over and distributed among the rural poor.

The economic policy of the Akali Dal, therefore, would mainly be directed to achieve these objectives.

Agrarian Sector

In the agrarian sector, the country has witnessed a series of land reforms on one hand and on the other hand a new phase of green revolution. The Akali Dal is pledged to stipulate the green revolution on one hand and to ensure that increase in agricultural production leads to the improvement in the standard of living of all sections of the rural population, particularly the middle peasants and poor and landless population. To achieve this end the Akali Dal proposes to take in the coming period following measures:

(a) Initiate land reform measures to remove disparity and to increase agricultural production. The existing legislation regarding ceiling on land would be reviewed and a ceiling on 30 standard acres per family be fixed. All remaining intermediaries on the land would be abolished and real security of tenure to actual tillers conferred. Landless agricultural labour and poor peasants would be settled on surplus lands and Government waste cultivable land would be distributed to the landless, preferably to the persons belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The scheme for distribution of these lands would be evolved in such a manner that poor sections of Harijans and landless population benefit from it. Along with these, the Akali Dal would also examine how the tenants can be given the right to mortgage their interests in land for obtaining credit and how restrictions can be placed on sale of lands given by Government to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and backward classes in favour of others.

(b) The Akali Dal will also strive for the modernisation of agriculture so that the middle, small and poor peasants too can benefit from cheap in-puts like electricity, water, seeds, fertilizers and credit through co-operatives and other public Agencies.

(c) The Akali Dal shall strive that agricultural prices are fixed on the basis of the cost of production of the average farmer. Prices should be declared well in advance of the sowing period. State Government shall have the authority to fix the price.

(d) The Akali Dal stands for complete state trading in food-grains and steps would be taken to facilitate the take-over of wholesale trade

in foodgrains and other agricultural produce by the State Government and Government Agencies.

(e) The Akali Dal is against all types of food zones and restrictions placed on the movement of agriculture produce in the country. The whole country be treated as a single food zone.

(f) Special efforts will be made to complete Thein Dam and Bhatinda Thermal Plant, so that irrigation facilities and electricity is augumented in the State and ultimately made more cheap. A concerted effort shall be made to set up an atomic electricity plant.

(g) Service co-operatives should be built up in rural areas and special attention should be paid to development of minor irrigation projects in those districts where canal irrigation is not available.

Industry

The Akali Dal demands that all basic industries should be brought under the public sector. The Akali Dal wants all consumer industries dealing with essential commodities be nationalised so as to keep the price level under control and to end the exploitation of the poor consumer by the industrialists and the middle man.

Public Sector industries should be set up in such a manner as to remove the regional imbalances which have been created as a consequence of discriminatory policies of the Central Government.

A planned effort should be made to develop agrobased industries in the rural areas so as to relieve the pressure on population on the land. The management of industries should be democratised to include up to 50 percent representation of the workers on the management and a detailed scheme be brought under the public sector. The Akali Dal is committed to progressive nationalisation of transport.

Public Sector industries should be set up in such a manner as to remove the regional imbalances which have been created as a consequence of discriminatory policies of the Central Government.

Public Sector projects should be given more autonomy and manned by young competent persons committed to the project and special efforts should be made to build up a cadre of public sector projects.

Fiscal Policy

The Akali Dal demands the review of the whole taxation structure in such a manner so that incentives for tax evasion and black money are

totally eradicated. The Akali Dal stands for such taxation systems whose incidence of the tax would be direct and could not be transmitted to the general mass of the people. The present taxation simply penalises the poor and provides big loop-holes to the rich. The Akali Dal stands for de-monitisation of the currency in order to destroy the parallel black money economy in the country.

Workers Middle Class Employees and Agricultural Workers

The Akali Dal would strive for:

(a) Need based minimum wage for the industrial workers.

(b) Continued improvement in the standard of living of the Government employees.

(c) Minimum wages for agricultural workers to be reviewed and if necessary, increased.

(d) Pluging loop-holes in the existing labour Legislation to ensure decent living conditions for the workers.

(e) Executing urgent measures for increasing housing accommodation, both in the urban and rural areas, for the lowest rungs of the Society.

Unemployment

The Akali Dal stands for total employment in the country. To start with, it feels it is the duty of the Government to provide jobs immediately, at least to all the educated and skilled people. Till the jobs are not provided, unemployment allowance should be provided to be shared on 50:50 basis between the Centre and the State Governments at the following rates:

Matriculate and skilled workers	Rs. 50/- per month
B.A.	Rs. 75/- per month
M.A.	Rs. 100/- per month
Professional Engineers and Doctors	Rs. 150/- per month
Skilled persons	Rs. 50/- per month

Provide old age pension to all deserving persons beyond the age of sixty-five.

Scheduled Castes and Weaker Sections of Society

Akali Dal will strive to raise the economic standard of the Scheduled Castes and other Weaker Sections of Society by providing them educational facilities, employment and other concessions so as to bring them at par with the advanced sections of society. These classes will be provided foodgrains at subsidised rates.

The Shiromani Akali Dal realises that India is a federal and republican geographical entity of different languages, religions and cultures. To safeguard the fundamental rights of the religious and linguistic minorities, to fulfil the demands of the democratic traditions and to pave the way for economic progress, it has become imperative that the Indian constitution infrastructure should be given federal shape by redefining the Central and State relations and rights on the lines of the aforesaid principle and objectives.

The concept of total revolution given by Lok Naik, Sh. Jaya Prakash Narain is also based upon the progressive decentralisation of powers. The climax of the process of centralisation of powers of the States through repeated amendments of the constitution during the Congress regime came before the countrymen in the form of the Emergency, when all fundamental rights of all citizens were usurped. It was then that the programme of decentralization of powers ever advocated by Shiromani Akali Dal was openly accepted and adopted by other political parties including Janta Party, C.P.I.(M), A.D.M.K. etc.

Shiromani Akali Dal has ever stood firm on this principle and that is why after very careful consideration it unanimously adopted a resolution to this effect first at the All India Akali Conference, Batala, then at Sri Anandpur Sahib which has endorsed the principle of State autonomy in keeping with the concept of Federalism.

As such, the Shiromani Akali Dal emphatically urges upon the Janta Government to take cognizance of the different linguistic and cultural sections, religious minorities as also the voice of millions of people and recast the constitutional structure of the country on real and meaningful federal principles to obviate the possibility of any danger to national unity and the integrity of the country and further, to enable the states to play a useful role for the progress and prosperity of the Indian people in their respective areas by the meaningful exercise of their powers.

The Resolution moved by S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra, President Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and endorsed by S. Prakash Singh Badal, Chief Minister, Punjab. At the 18th All India Akali Conference held at Ludhiana on 28–9 Oct. 1978.

Appendix 7

Revised List of 15 Demands Received from the Akali Dal by the Government in October 1981

Religious Demands

1. Unconditional release of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and judicial enquiry with regard to police action in connection with Delhi Rally (7 September), Chowk Mehta and Chando Kalan.

2. Removal of alleged Government high-handedness in the management of Delhi Gurdwaras, holding of democratic elections after removal of forcible control by 'one of Government's stooges'.

3. Restoration of the SGPC's right to send pilgrim parties to Pakistan and deploy sewadars for the maintenance of local Sikh shrines.

4. Permission to Sikhs travelling by air to wear kirpans in domestic and international flights.

5. An All India Gurdwaras Act should be passed.

6. Grant of holy city status to Amritsar on the pattern of Hardwar, Kurukshetra and Kashi.

7. Installation of 'Harimandir Radio' at Golden Temple, Amritsar to relay kirtan.

8. Renaming Flying Mail as Harimandir Express.

Political, Economic and Cultural Demands

9. As per the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, the S.A. Dal is firmly convinced that progress of States would entail prosperity of the Centre,

for which suitable amendments should be made in the Constitution to give more rights and provincial autonomy to States. The Centre should retain Foreign Affairs, Defence, Currency and Communications (including means of transport), while the remaining portfolios should be with the States. Besides, the Sikhs should enjoy special rights as a nation.

10. Merger of Punjabi-speaking areas and Chandigarh into Punjab.

11. Handing over of dams and headworks in the State to Punjab and re-distribution of river waters as per national and international rules.

12. Second language status to Punjabi language in Haryana, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan.

13. Stoppage of uprooting of Punjabi farmer from Terai area of UP.

14. Setting up of a dry port at Amritsar.

15. A licence should be granted for a New Bank in place of the Punjab and Sind Bank, which should be under Sikh control and remunerative price should be fixed for agricultural products by linking it to the index of industrial production.

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Appendix 8

Key People in Punjab Politics

1. BEANT SINGH (1922–5) born in village Bilaspur, district Ludhiana. Graduated from Government College, Lahore. Served in the Army for two years. After partition of India settled in village Kotli, district Ludhiana. Entered politics in 1950. Elected to the Punjab Assembly in 1969 as an independent candidate and again in 1972 as a Congress party candidate. Re-elected third time in 1980 and became Minister of Revenue, PWD and Technical Education in the Ministry, headed by Darbara Singh. Elected Secretary of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee in 1985 and President in 1986. Elected Chief Minister of Punjab in February 1992. Assassinated outside the Punjab Civil Secretariat, Chandigarh on 31 August 1995.

2. PRAKASH SINGH BADAL: b. 8 December 1927 in village Abul Khurana, district Faridkot. Graduated from Formman Christian College, Lahore. Entered politics in 1947. Elected to the Punjab Vidhan Sabha in 1957, 1969, and 1972 on Akali party ticket. Elected Chief Minister Punjab (March 1970–June 1971). Jailed during the Emergency (1975–6); elected to the Lok Sabha in 1977 and was Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation till 1977. Re-elected to the Punjab Vidhan Sabha and Chief Minister for second time since 1977 to February 1980. Leader of the Opposition, Re-elected to the Punjab Vidhan Sabha in 1980, 1985, 1997, and 2002, and Chief Minister for the third time (1992–97). Active in state as well as Akali party and SGPC politics.

Wife Surinder Kaur managed his lands and business. Two children, son and daughter: son Sukhbir Singh Badal also in politics as Member of the Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha, and presently Rajya Sabha.

3. S. S. BARNALA: b. 21 October 1925 in village Ateli Begpur (Haryana). Law graduate from Lucknow in 1946: practiced law in Nabha and later in Barnala. Elected to the Punjab Vidhan Sabha in 1967 on the Akali party ticket from Barnala. He became Education Minister in 1969. He spent 14 months in jail during the Emergency and was incarcerated in Pachmarhi (Madhya Pradesh) where he taught himself painting. In 1977 he was elected to the Lok Sabha and appointed Agriculture, Food and Irrigation Minister. In 1980 he was back in Punjab Vidhan Sabha. In 1985 he was elected Chief Minister of the state till his government was dismissed in May 1987 and President's Rule imposed in the state. He was appointed Governor of Tamil Nadu in 1990, but resigned in protest. He was re-elected to the Lok Sabha in 1996 and served as Petrochemicals Minister under the Vajpayee government at New Delhi. He lost in the next election and was appointed the first Governor of newly formed State of Uttaranchal. He is currently Governor of Andhra Pradesh.

4. AMARINDER SINGH: b. 11 March 1942, son of Maharajah Yadvindra Singh of Patiala. Educated at Lawrence School, Sanawar, Doon School, Dehradun, and the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla. Served in the Indian Army and saw action in the 1965 Indo-Pak War, in the rank of a Captain. Entered politics in 1980. Elected to Lok Sabha. Resigned in 1984 in protest against Operation Blue Star, elected to the Punjab Vidhan Sabha in 1985 on Akali ticket and served as Minister of Agriculture, Forests, Rural Development and Panchayats. Resigned in protest against police entry in the Golden Temple, re-elected to the Punjab Assembly in 1992. Formed his own Shiromani Akali Dal Panthic which merged with the Congress. In 1998 appointed President of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Party. Re-elected Member of the Punjab Assembly and elected Chief Minister of the State in 2002.

5. SURENDRA NATH: b.1926. Joined Indian Police Service, served in Kashmir and Mizoram. Appointed Governor of Punjab in 1992, killed in an aircrash with other members of his family in 1994.

6. BUTA SINGH: b. 21 March 1934 in village Mustafapur, district Jalandhar, Mazhabi scheduled caste. Education: MA, Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Mumbai; PDD, Bundelkhand University, Jhansi. Elected to the Lok Sabha eight times from constituencies reserved for Scheduled Castes from Punjab and Rajasthan on Akali and Congress tickets and an independent candidate. Positions held: Deputy Minister Railways (1994–75); thereafter several cabinet rank posts including Home

Affairs (1995–9). Excommunicated from the community 1984 following Operation Blue Star; readmitted following apology and penance.

7. RAJINDER KAUR BHATTAL: b. 30 September 1945. Both parents were involved in the freedom struggle. Her mother was in Lahore Central Jail when she was born. Education: BA, BEd from Sangrur. Congress party candidate from Dhanaula in 1972 state elections, lost by a narrow margin. Lost again in 1977 state elections. Won the same seat in 1990 and made Minister of Tourism and Culture. In 1992 she won from Lahra Gaga (Sangrur) and made Minister of Food and Civil Supplies: She was Deputy Chief Minister in H. S. Brar's Cabinet and on Brar's removal became the first woman and youngest Chief Minister of Punjab on 21 November 1996.

8. MANMOHAN SINGH: b. 26 September 1932 in Gah (west Punjab) presently in Pakistan. India's 13th Prime Minister was sworn in on 20 May 2004. Singh, who is universally well regarded, was educated at the University of Punjab, Oxford, and Cambridge. He won Cambridge's prestigious Adam Smith Prize in 1956. He taught at Punjab University for nine years before being posted for international duty with UNCTAD (1966–9). He then joined the Delhi School of Economics as a professor for two years before joining the government to serve in various capacities.

He first shot into prominence when he successfully engineered the country's economic recovery in 1991 after a severe balance of payment crisis. His economic reforms as Finance Minister in P. V. Narasimha Rao's Congress government from 1991–6 changed the face of India in the global comity of nations. He was responsible for altering corporate India's thinking and with it the life of millions of middle-class Indians by liberalizing the economy His reforms altered the outlook of foreigners towards India. Singh has held several positions, including chief economic advisor and finance secretary, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission and Chairman of UGC in the 1980s and early 1990s. Hardworking, meticulous, and known as a 'gentleman politician', this Rajya Sabha member from Assam was welcomed by trade and industry as an instant choice for the coveted post because of his impeccable credentials, bureaucratic experience and intimate knowledge of international economics. He is married to Gursharan Kaur and has three daughters.

9. MONTEK SINGH AHLUWALJA: b. 24 November 1943. Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, Government of India. Educated at

the University of Delhi and Oxford. Considered one of India's top economists, he began his career with the World Bank and subsequently held several prestigious appointments both with the Government of India and international organizations including the Word Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Dr Ahluwalia served as Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, when India's reform process was started under Finance Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. He later served as Finance Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, and Member of the Planning Commission, and the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister. Just before taking over as Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission on 4 July 2004 after Dr Manmohan Singh was sworn in as India's Prime Minister, Dr Ahluwalia was Director of the Independent Evaluation Office of the IMF in Washington DC. A prolific author and economic thinker, Dr Ahluwalia is married to renowned economist Isher Judge Ahluwalia. They have a son and a daughter.

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